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First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

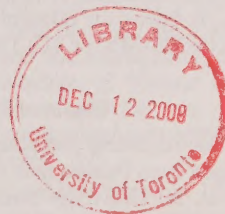
Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 5 December 2000

Mardi 5 décembre 2000



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 décembre 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My statement today is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, your department very closely monitors waste disposal sites, particularly for leachate, and that's a good thing; that has to happen. However, you have very recently changed the legislation to ban the incineration of PCBs and dioxins. That may or may not be a good thing, but what it has caused is that municipalities that have difficulty getting rid of the leachate out of their waste disposal sites are now passing it through their sewage treatment plants. They were never designed for this.

Out the end of a sewage treatment plant comes a product that I would call sludge; you call it soil conditioner. This soil conditioner is then taken and spread on farmers' fields, farmers who have no knowledge that this sludge contains at times fairly high percentages of dioxins and PCBs.

Minister, you have a responsibility to provide a leadership role, to provide support, and to provide funding for the disposal of toxic materials. To put it on unsuspecting farmers' fields is not disposal of this product at all. The neighbours of those fields and the farmers themselves are entitled to know what is being spread on their land. Surely you recognize your mandate to protect the groundwater in this province and not to allow this cycle to happen where they return to the water and pollute more wells. I call for leadership to protect the quality of water in this province.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I say to the Minister of Health across the way, if you are going to get sick I would offer that you don't get sick in the town of Kapuskasing, because last night for the second time in a month we had to close the emergency department in Kapuskasing. Why? Because we have a shortage of doctors.

Your government came to power, told us that you were going to find a solution, that you had all the answers and that within a short period of time we were

going to have enough physicians in northern Ontario to at the very least man our emergency departments. For the second time in a month the Sensenbrenner Hospital in Kapuskasing had to shut down its emergency department. Yes, they dealt as best they could, by way of nurses, when people walked in the door, but they did not have a physician on-site.

I say to the government across the way that there are two things you could do today. The first is that you could announce a short-term measure to assist communities like Kapuskasing to make sure they have the dollars to their hospitals to offer full locums for people to come in—outside doctors to assist and give a bit of respite to the doctors who are there. The doctors who are there are working themselves off their feet, and they don't have the ability to cover emergency wards for 24 hours seven days a week.

The next thing you could do is longer term. You could support what the NDP and others have been saying across northern Ontario, which is to create a northern medical facility where we're able to train our own young people in northern Ontario in the practice of medicine. That way, when they graduate, they will stay, and over the longer term we will not have what happened at the Sensenbrenner Hospital in Kapuskasing last night.

ARCHIVES

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise to inform my colleagues that the Listowel Archives has finally found a place to call home. Last Friday I attended the official opening of the new location that will house archives from Listowel and the surrounding communities, mainly the older townships of Wallace and Elma. After moving several times over the past 20 years, Listowel Archives has found a permanent home in a part of the Listowel Public Library.

The collection of local archives began in 1975, when some residents donated items for the Listowel Centennial. These items were later organized by volunteers from the local historical society and were kept in a room at the town hall. These archives were available for public viewing, but only by appointment. Over the years, the collection of archives grew and eventually became affiliated with the Stratford-Perth Archives. The Listowel Archives is open every day, and there are now two part-time employees.

I want to recognize the North Perth council, Mayor Vince Judge and the residents of North Perth for their

support of the local archives. I want to applaud the efforts of Elsie Karges, archivists Lutzen Reidstra and Carolyn Bart-Reidstra, and Listowel Archives clerks Kathy Wideman and Sonia Robin for their work in helping to preserve the rich history in the area so that future generations can acknowledge and be proud of their history.

Promoting and preserving our heritage is why I recently introduced a private member's bill that would create an archives awareness week. I encourage all members to support their local archives and indeed the Archives of Ontario as well.

DISCRIMINATION

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I rise in the House today to speak about the importance of playing a leading role in advancing the equality of women internationally. Specifically, I wish to speak to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

The convention came into force in September 1981 and is often described as an international bill of rights for women. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The convention provides the basis for realizing the equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to and equal opportunities in political and public life.

Canada signed on to the convention but was unable to sign on to the optional protocol, apparently due to the unwillingness of this province to lend its support to this enforcement mechanism. The optional protocol provides for the ability of individual women and groups to petition directly to the committee on elimination of discrimination against women once all national remedies have been exhausted. Upon questioning by the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario, the minister responsible was unable to give her assurance that it was not Ontario which was holding back Canada from signing this protocol.

I call upon the minister to set the record straight on this issue. I call upon the minister to assure all the women of Ontario and Canada that it is not as a result of this provincial government that Canada has been unable to take a leading role in eliminating all forms of discrimination against women.

EVENTS IN DURHAM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I am proud to rise in the House today and talk about some of the good things happening in my community, the riding of Durham.

To begin with, I'd like to recognize Beth Carr, from the village of Orono, who was recently named as a recipient of the 2000 Shirley Lavis Award. This award was given to Ms Carr in recognition of her contributions to the Distress Centre Durham over the past decade. During this period, Ms Carr served on the organization's

board, has been a shift supervisor and help-line worker and has also trained front-line people. I'd like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Beth Carr for all she has done for the people of my community.

I'd also like to congratulate the members of Blackstock's ONO Club, which recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. Founded in 1950 as a club for young women, ONO stands for Our Night Out, and its founding members were Eileen Snooks, Florence Collins, Marion Rahm, Noreen Malcolm, Gwenyth Thompson, Kathleen Dorrell and Gwen Ballingall Mulholland, who is the group's charter president. Two other long-time members are Aileen Van Camp and Joan Graham, and at present they have 20 members.

I think, most important, this community organization raises money for worthwhile activities within the community of Blackstock, in addition to several unique fundraising efforts recently for theatre groups, as well as local scouting and guiding operations in the riding, including the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation as well as others. I'd like to thank publicly the volunteers and organizations like ONO for making our community a better place to live, work and raise a family.

1340

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I rise today to urge the Minister of Community and Social Services to recognize the serious challenges facing Ontario's developmental services sector. This sector is made up of over 400 hard-working agencies located in communities all across Ontario. These agencies provide community-based support and care to Ontarians with developmental and physical disabilities. They serve as the vital link between our most vulnerable citizens and a life of independence.

But the government has failed to recognize the pressing human resource challenges that face these agencies. As it stands now, these agencies are simply unable to pay their staff an appropriate salary. As a result, they're losing their staff to perpetual turnover which is affecting their ability to serve their vulnerable clients.

Instead of actually dealing with the wage disparity crisis in the sector, this government is only giving these agencies the ability to budget for staff increases of 1%. While 2% was deemed good enough for the broader public sector, this government decided they would allow less than 1% for the developmental services sector.

Interjection: Shame.

Mr Gravelle: It is a shame. This is a stunningly unfair double standard.

Furthermore, my office has been inundated by calls from parents and families desperately trying to find care and support for their adult children with developmental disabilities. Many of these calls are from aging parents

who soon will be unable to sustain their level of support. Despite their heartbreaking efforts, this government continues to deny resources to the system to address this serious shortfall in services. I challenge the minister to recognize the issues and to respond.

EVENTS IN PETERBOROUGH

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): The spirit of Christmas is alive and well in Lang Pioneer Village as Heritage Christmas is celebrated on Sunday, December 10, from 12 noon to 5 pm.

Meet Father Christmas and enjoy mulled apple cider or the famous ham, apples and onions on a bun at the Keene Hotel. Take in the aromas of chestnuts roasting over an open fire at the Fitzpatrick House and indulge in the tantalizing array of traditional Christmas baking. You can learn how to make cedar garlands and other pioneer decorations. If Mother Nature co-operates, there will be horse-drawn sleigh rides through the village as well as a chance to try out snowshoeing and snow sculpting.

You can enjoy traditional festive music throughout the day at the Douro Town Hall provided by local talent called the Muskovy Ducks, and it wouldn't be a Heritage Christmas without carollers filling the air with your favourite holiday melodies.

Local vendors will have an eye-catching array of unique handicraft items on sale to help you finish your Christmas shopping.

I would like to invite all members of this Legislature to visit my riding of Peterborough this weekend and be part of Heritage Christmas.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My comments today are in relationship to the economic statement yesterday. One of the key charts in this book shows that Ontario's population grew in the last 10 years by about 1.3 million people. Eighty per cent of that was through immigration. The government recently published Ontario population projections, as they do every five years, that show that about 70% of the growth will come through immigration.

In its documents to attract industry to Ontario, the government talks about the importance of immigration to Ontario. In my opinion, a key to our economic growth will be our ability to continue to attract quality people who want to come to Ontario in the future. I might add that I don't think it's going to be as easy as it was in the past. World economies are doing well. You watch Ireland and California: they are aggressively attracting people to move to Ireland and to California.

I'm concerned. We've closed our welcome houses here in Ontario. I talked recently with someone from Kitchener who has a group of 51 foreign-trained physicians, none of whom can practise here in Ontario; word gets out about that. I talked to the Speaker of the

Michigan state Legislature, who says their biggest job is to attract quality workers to come to Michigan.

I would say that for all of us this is a key issue for our economic future. We need to do more here in Ontario.

BILTMORE HATS

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): Our government recognizes the value of small businesses as leaders which foster prosperity and provide jobs to our citizens in our local communities. As part of the Salute to Small Business Month, I visited one such business, called Biltmore Hats, in my riding of Guelph-Wellington. This has been an entrepreneurial success in our riding since 1919, and the key to their success lies in their vision of a company that sells only the highest-quality items. Biltmore is an impressive local story because it has maintained its local roots by operating primarily from Guelph, but has done so while breaking into the international market, gaining clients from across North America and beyond.

On my visit to Biltmore Hats, Walter Gosk, Judy McQuarrie and designer Clare Wyngaardn accompanied me on a tour. They showed me what skills and precision go into the making of a fine-quality Biltmore hat. The hats are still made on machines that were produced in the 1950s but that are still effective and efficient and produce an exceptional quality product. The factory itself is like a functioning museum.

Hockey fans would know Biltmore as the company which started the term "hat trick" and gave hats to players who scored three goals in one game. People should know that Biltmore is also promoting Canadian culture, for all our RCMP and OPP officers' hats are made in the Biltmore plant.

I would like my colleagues to recognize this fine institution in the city of Guelph. This is a very important, historic business that continues to be part of that exceptional group of entrepreneurs we all recognize and appreciate as key parts of the businesses that make Ontario prosper and do well.

VISITORS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With your indulgence I would like to take this opportunity to introduce Mr and Mrs Baker, Stan and Bernice, as well as their daughter Ava and son Philip. They're the parents of our page Jared Baker from the riding of Durham. I'd like to welcome them.

ANNUAL REPORT, PROVINCIAL AUDITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2000 Annual Report of the Provincial Auditor.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, MonteRuprecht, Tony
Smitherman, GeorgeSTANDING COMMITTEE
ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 132, An Act to enact the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, repeal the Degree Granting Act and change the title of and make amendments to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities Act / Projet de loi 132, Loi édictant la Loi de 2000 favorisant le choix et l'excellence au niveau post-secondaire, abrogeant la Loi sur l'attribution de grades universitaires et modifiant le titre et le texte de la Loi sur le ministère des Collèges et Universités.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: Mr Gilchrist has moved the adoption of the report from the standing committee on general government respecting Bill 132.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Jackson, Cameron	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tumbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John	Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario
Bartolucci, Rick	Cordiano, Joseph	Martel, Shelley
Bisson, Gilles	Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony
Bountrogianni, Marie	Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie
Brown, Michael A.	Gurretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Hay, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 45; the nays are 36.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITORS

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Hillfield-Strathallan school from Hamilton, thank you for coming.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 97(d), a minister shall answer written questions within 24 sitting days, unless he or she has indicated otherwise, where a written question has been put on the order paper. On June 20, 2000, I put a question to the Attorney General to provide specific details of all costs associated with the province's participation in the Firearms Act reference before the Alberta Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court of Canada and otherwise.

Now, the answer was due October 31, and I don't need to tell you we're now into December. It's over a month late. I don't know what the minister is hiding, but I'd like a ruling as to this violation of the rule.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for the point of order. It is a legitimate point of order. My understanding is that in fact it is overdue, and I'm sure the Attorney General will take the point of order and be able to get an answer as soon as possible. I thank the member for his legitimate point of order.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to raise a point of order with regard to standing order 97(d). The minister does have 24 sitting days. On September 25, I had asked the Minister of Community and Social Services to give an account of the following aspects of the Ontario Works program: how many Ontario Works participants have been forced to sell cottages as a requirement of being on Ontario Works; what is the actual number of Ontario Works participants who've had liens registered against their homes; and what percentage of Ontario Works recipients does this represent.

This question was put to the minister on September 25. There have been 35 sitting days, so we are clearly 11 days over the deadline. I would ask if the Speaker would assist in ensuring that this question is answered.

The Speaker: I thank the member. Again, in checking the record, it's my understanding that it is a legitimate point of order, and I'm sure the minister responsible will investigate and get an answer back as well. I thank the member for her legitimate point of order.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Mr Peters, from the standing committee on estimates, presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 60(a), the following estimates, 2000-01, are reported back to the House as they were not previously selected by the committee for consideration and are deemed to be received and concurred in:

Office of the Assembly

201 Office of the Assembly, \$89,529,000

202 Commission(er)'s, \$9,316,200.

Office of the Chief Election Officer

501 Office of the Chief Election Officer, \$2,137,700.

Ombudsman Ontario

2301 Ombudsman Ontario, \$8,106,800.

Office of the Provincial Auditor

2501 Office of the Provincial Auditor, \$8,213,400.

1400

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REMEDIES FOR ORGANIZED
CRIME AND OTHER UNLAWFUL
ACTIVITIES ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LES RECOURS
POUR CRIME ORGANISÉ
ET AUTRES ACTIVITÉS ILLÉGALES

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to provide civil remedies for organized crime and other unlawful activities / Projet de loi 155, Loi prévoyant des recours civils pour crime organisé et autres activités illégales.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister for a short statement?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'll make a minister's statement, Speaker.

HORSE RIDING SAFETY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ
DES CAVALIERS

Mrs Molinari moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 156, An Act to increase the safety of equestrian riders / Projet de loi 156, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des cavaliers.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for Thornhill for a short statement?

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): The purpose of the Horse Riding Safety Act, 2000, private member's bill is to increase the safety of horse riders under the age of 18 by requiring the operators of riding establishments to ensure that proper safety equipment is used. I am bringing this bill forward in memory of Elizabeth Hader and countless other children throughout the province who have met untimely deaths as a result of unsafe riding conditions in Ontario.

The bill has supplementary amendments to the Highway Traffic Act and makes it an offence for any rider under the age of 18 to ride a horse on a highway without the proper safety equipment. Parents and guardians of riders under the age of 16 would have the responsibility to not knowingly authorize or permit young riders to contravene the proposed provisions.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

ORGANIZED CRIME LEGISLATION

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Our government has made a commitment to strengthen the fight against organized crime and to protect the people of Ontario from being victims of illicit activity.

In this year's budget, we allocated \$4 million for the strategic deployment of specialized police forces and dedicated legal resources to focus on organized crime. Today we are taking another important step to fulfill our commitment.

A few minutes ago I introduced the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act. If passed, this legislation would do three things: first of all, enable the province to ask the courts to freeze, seize and forfeit to the crown proceeds of unlawful activity, as well as property that is likely to be used to commit an unlawful activity; second, create a special fund consisting of the proceeds from civil forfeitures which people who have been directly victimized by unlawful activities could access; and third, enable the province to launch civil actions in court against conspiracies that engage in unlawful activities. If the legislation is passed, the province would also create a strike force of investigators, civil lawyers and forensic accountants to ensure that these cases are vigorously pursued in court.

Today, organized crime is more than just drugs and thugs. It is increasingly sophisticated, using new technologies and strategic alliances to take advantage of any opportunity to make money illegally. Every day, organized crime victimizes honest, hard-working people either directly by defrauding them of their hard-earned money or indirectly through higher consumer prices and service fees. It is estimated that organized crime costs the Canadian economy between \$5 billion and \$9 billion

each year. We know that most unlawful activities are motivated by profit.

Our government believes that it is time to prevent further victimization. It is time to help people who have been victimized by organized crime and other unlawful activity. It is time for organized crime to return its unlawful profits to its victims.

This government made a commitment to make Ontario a safer place to live and to do business. I encourage all members of the Legislature to help us achieve our goal by supporting this legislation.

VOLUNTEERS

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): As the minister whose portfolio includes volunteerism, I'm proud today to speak of three important priorities in all of our respective communities. I want to speak about volunteers, the government's leadership in supporting and promoting volunteerism and, third, the government's partnering with the volunteer sector.

We all know that volunteers make this province a richer place to work, live and raise our families. One in three Ontarians involve themselves in some sort of volunteerism activity each year, dedicating much of their time and much of their energy to help others in their community. In fact, volunteers in Ontario give more than 422 million hours every year to more than 60,000 organizations.

Those volunteer activities are a vital part of the fabric of life in Ontario. We might ask why, and the answer is because where volunteers work, they shape the communities around them. Look at what volunteering does. Through the simple and selfless act of helping another person, sometimes directly and other times indirectly by working for a worthwhile cause, individuals reconnect with their communities and rekindle their faith in a future full of promise.

Look at where you can always find volunteers. You can find volunteers in our hospitals, in our social service activities, in cultural centres in each one of our communities. They are at every community event we hold. We find them on the sports fields or in arenas. The commitment and dedication of volunteers help provide quality programs. Their compassion and humanity improve the quality of life for other Ontarians.

This government values voluntary action, and supporting voluntary action has been a priority of our government from the beginning. Five years ago this government initiated consultations with the voluntary sector. We wanted to determine what the sector needed and how we could work together with them. We responded to those consultations with an announcement in the spring 1996 budget, where we put \$10 million to support volunteers. In January 1997, we received the report from the advisory board on the voluntary sector. It resulted in the volunteer linkages program. Let me recall for you some

of the initiatives that have flowed from that advisory program.

1410

In 1997 we provided \$7.5 million over five years to help volunteer organizations develop partnerships with other organizations in their own communities or within their sector. In 1999 we invested a further \$6 million so they could do just that. Our volunteer action on-line program enables organizations to work together more effectively and more efficiently. It helps them to share resources. It helps them to develop from each other's experience.

For groups that are just beginning to make use of the current technology, we have developed a guide. This guide helps steer them through the sometimes complex decision-making process of getting connected to the Internet and to the Web.

We have expanded the mandate of the Volunteer Service Awards to include volunteers from all sectors—social services, agriculture, health, recreation, law, justice and education—and we have increased the number of public celebrations that commemorate the key role volunteers play in this incredible province. Last year there were 31 award ceremonies across the province, and more than 5,000 Ontarians were recognized for their services in their home communities.

Let me go into even greater depth with one of the new provincial award programs. This is the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers. This medal lets us recognize, in a very public way, the achievements of our young people and the important contributions they are making to the province of Ontario.

Ontario believes that volunteering gives young people a unique opportunity, an opportunity to learn about caring and compassion, an opportunity to learn about the potential each of us has to make a contribution and to make a difference in our communities. With that in mind, we introduced the student community involvement requirement. This initiative requires all students to complete at least 40 hours of community involvement before they graduate from high school.

Premier Harris in 1998 convened a Premier's Round Table on Voluntary Action. He met with volunteers from many voluntary sectors, the business community and the government to explore ways to promote and strengthen voluntarism in Ontario. As a follow-up to that meeting, 10 community round tables were held across the province. These community round tables exemplify this government's partnership approach to strengthening voluntary action in Ontario. The tables continued and expanded discussions on how to strengthen volunteerism in Ontario through the involvement of our local community representatives.

Volunteers play an important role in Ontario, one of which is found in the local grant review teams of the Ontario Trillium Foundation. When we guaranteed \$100 million in annual funding from gambling revenues for Trillium for distribution to charities and non-profit organizations, we needed a mechanism for deciding

which community groups were worthy recipients. The local teams have put forward community priorities. Of course, many of the charities and the not-for-profit organizations that receive Trillium grants also rely heavily on volunteers to do their work within their communities.

It's all about partnership, about our government, volunteer groups, the private sector and other levels of government all working together to celebrate and to recognize volunteer action in this wonderful province. Together we're building bridges of opportunity, bridges that will permit every Ontarian to participate more fully in life in their communities.

When we look around, we see we are surrounded by good deeds. We see that the people offer up grand gestures every day or small acts of kindness to their fellow human beings. Underlying it all is the work of volunteers giving in a quiet way and getting the job done. In the account books of this province, the contributions of volunteers are recorded in invisible ink; they don't show up. But if they did, we know the number would be impressive. So let me simply say thank you to the millions of volunteers here in the province of Ontario and everywhere. What better day to do this than December 5, International Volunteer Day, a day designated to pay tribute to and celebrate all the achievements that have been made by volunteers?

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who make the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation and the government of Ontario work so efficiently. On a personal note, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all the people who take the time to volunteer to coach my kids and the kids of everybody in this House on the hockey fields, on the baseball diamonds, in the swimming pools. Those people truly enrich the lives of my children, and I'd like to thank them for that.

International Volunteer Day is a lead-up to the International Year of the Volunteer, which begins next month, about which this government will have more to say in the coming months. The International Year of the Volunteer will provide a unique opportunity to highlight the achievements of millions of volunteers in the province of Ontario who do so much to serve their community and to make their community a better place to live. We hope by doing so that we can encourage even more people to engage in voluntary actions.

In 2001 we will build further on the strong foundations and partnerships that we have already entered into, and we all look forward to that.

ORGANIZED CRIME LEGISLATION

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals will support any effective, constructive and lawful measures that will assist law enforcement officials and give them the tools they need in order to help victims of crime. That's why last summer, in July, Ontario Liberals unveiled their four-

point plan to crack down on organized violence and organized crime.

Our concern at the time was that the government of the day seemed to only be holding summits on the issue of organized crime. The Attorney General had attended summits in Vancouver, New Jersey, Delaware and Washington; then he came back to Toronto and invited all his new friends back to Toronto for a summit there as well. Our concern was that yet again the government was all talk and no action when it came to crime.

It is good to see today that some of the initiatives in the four-point plan are included in the statement by the minister, particularly with respect to the strike force.

With respect to the bill, I've had the bill for two minutes. I can say that if it meets the test already articulated, we would want to support it.

That said, whereas I've had it for two minutes, this government has had 2,000 days to prepare for this bill. It's incredible when you start to think about it. What are this government's priorities? They say law and order, and the events of yesterday make us wonder. They say law and order, and yet it takes 2,000 days for them to come up with a bill that they had been talking about when they were in opposition.

I went and looked back, and I thought, gee, this idea of a special fund consisting of proceeds from civil forfeitures sounds familiar. So I looked in the Hansard and I found some remarkable proponents of it. Here's a quote: "We know that murderers are going to become millionaires, many times over perhaps, through the sale of their recollections of their crimes. We cannot allow this to happen. We must listen to the citizens in Ontario who are asking us to lead, to pass legislation and to make laws that will protect the victims of crime."

That was said in 1993 by the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer.

Applause.

Mr Bryant: The government claps, yet Mrs Witmer's cabinet has had 2,000 days to pass this legislation. I say to that minister, where have you been for the last 2,000 days? Why were you all talk then and we're only seeing a bill now?

I look further and I see this about a bill that an opposition member, at the time the member for Burlington South, the Honourable Cam Jackson, had proposed. He's had 2,000 days to make that become law and we're only seeing it now. We have to be skeptical of this law. After all, listen to this endorsement:

"No political promise sells better than the age-old pledge to 'get tough on crime.' Small wonder, then, that Ontario's provincial government, which is drifting along with little sense of direction at the moment, has announced plans to implement new US-style laws that would permit officials to seize property of the criminal gangs.

"But such new laws would be redundant," the editorial says.

"Like too many Ontario law-and-order initiatives these days, this one appears to have been cooked up quickly with the goal of grabbing headlines."

1420

That's from the National Post, December 2, 2000. If the National Post is indicting this bill, then we ought to take it very seriously.

Our great concern here is that instead of actually doing something about crime, the government may yet again be just talking about doing something about crime. There are constructive initiatives that have been put forward by Liberal members. I would encourage the government to adopt those into law, as they wanted them adopted into law in 1993 and 1994. They have had those 2,000 days to pass them.

One more quote: "Instead of blaming the federal government, which I'm sure some members are going to do today, our province should start finding ways of deepening its co-operation with Ottawa. Other provinces have succeeded on behalf of their victims." That's the member for Burlington South, Cam Jackson.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): The value of volunteerism in our society goes without saying, but I believe this government has done one extra thing. They have imposed volunteerism. They don't seem to understand the term "volunteer" when it comes to educators. I would suggest our volunteers are invaluable, but unfortunately are now stressed to the max.

ORGANIZED CRIME LEGISLATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Yet another law-and-order announcement from this government. The Attorney General stands up like Elliot Ness and he's going to take on organized crime this time, just like attorneys general have been prepared to take on deadbeat dads. Maybe this Attorney General better start finishing some of the projects he started, consistently following up before he embarks on new enterprises.

The Family Responsibility Office remains one of the sources of the most frequent complaints to our constituency offices across this province. Four years later and this Attorney General is still screwing up and victimizing women, their kids and those fathers legitimately paying, as well as ignoring those deadbeat dads.

It would have been far more refreshing to have heard this minister stand up today and talk about getting real about the Victims' Bill of Rights and fulfilling that promise to create a Victims' Bill of Rights that indeed entails providing some rights for victims rather than the toothless one this government persists in maintaining. It would have been awfully pleasant, and we would have been far more enthusiastic, had this Attorney General stood up today and told us about the status of his sex offender registry. Big announcement, legislative effort,

we've seen zip, zero, nada, from this Attorney General and this government.

This afternoon this Attorney General and his government are going to introduce a time allocation motion on Bill 117, their so-called domestic violence bill, the bill that will permit abusive spouses, abusive husbands, wife beaters to maintain their arsenal of weapons. God forbid this government would interfere with the right to bear arms by taking handguns and other firearms away from men who consistently beat their wives.

It's about time that this Attorney General, rather than the photo ops, rather than the talking tough with his new-found obsession with organized crime, contrasted with his apparent disinterest in the disorganized crime that has permeated his backbenches, started delivering some real substance rather than mere words. This Attorney General is big when it comes to the rhetoric, but he doesn't deliver when it comes to substance. Another announcement, another promise made, another promise inevitably broken. This Attorney General's got a whole lot that he better fix up before he embarks on his Elliot Ness escapade.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I want to thank and congratulate all volunteers across the province. Your countless hours of dedication to our communities deserve thanks and recognition.

But we were expecting another announcement from you today as the minister responsible for women's issues. I was ready for that and excited about it. Women are dying at the hands of their male partners. Each year in Ontario an average of 40 women are killed by their intimate partners. Men are charged every day with stalking, battering, threatening and assaulting their wives or partners. You know that the cross-sectoral violence against women strategy group has called on your government to bring in emergency measures for women and children. My leader and I asked the question directly to your leader, the Premier of this province, yesterday and he promised nothing.

Minister, the time has come for you to bring in some of those measures. They are: shelter funding—the shelters are overflowing, and many women and their children have no place to go. You cancelled second-stage housing when you came into government, and women and their children are desperate for second-stage housing to be brought back.

You can gesture all you want over there, member from Scarborough. I am talking about women and children who are being battered daily in this province, and your government took away the services they need to get out of those situations. That is the reality of the situation. You can sit there and smirk and make fun of my gestures all you want. The reality is, these women and kids are suffering because of your cuts and because of your decontrol of rents. These women are suffering and often are having to go back to the very abusers they are trying

to get away from. We need an expansion of the women's assault helpline. Their lineups are months long. Women cannot get through across the province. You need to bring back rent control, and you need to raise the housing allowance for women on welfare, so they can afford to rent an apartment. Because of your decontrol of rents, they can no longer do that.

Minister, show some leadership here and announce tomorrow more funding for emergency shelters and services in this province.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for all parties to have an opportunity to remember Frederick McIntosh Cass, who was a member of this Legislature from 1955 to 1971 and who passed away last week.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Unanimous consent? Agreed.

FRED CASS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): Frederick Cass was the member for the riding of Grenville-Dundas, which is in eastern Ontario just south of the now city of Ottawa. Fred Cass was first elected in 1955 and rose very quickly in the government ranks. He first was made Minister of Highways. Being made Minister of Highways in the 1950s and 1960s was a considerable post at a time when construction of roads was perhaps at its peak in terms of its growth and those kinds of things. Shortly thereafter—I think about two years later—he was made the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Again, that was a very significant post in terms of the government of the day.

In 1961, as members may know, there was a leadership convention for the then Conservative Party. Mr Leslie Frost had retired, and Mr Cass was considered as one of the pretenders to the throne. He decided not to do that, but he was considered one of the people who were in the race for the leadership. He threw his support behind the then Treasurer, Jim Allan.

Fred Cass was then appointed Attorney General. One of the interesting anecdotes about Fred Cass was that even though he was the Attorney General of the day, he would go home to Chesterville, his hometown where he was born and raised, and practise law on the weekends. If we ever thought of the Attorney General of this day practising law in any way or form, it would be an unbelievable outrage in terms of conflict of interest. I must say for Mr Cass that he understood there could be a conflict in the courts and he stayed away from the courts and did exclusively a solicitor's work. But he continued to practise law while he was a Solicitor General, while he was a cabinet minister, while he was a member of the Legislature and after that period of time as well.

1430

Unfortunately, in 1962 or 1964, when Mr Cass was the Attorney General, he brought forward through a very hurried process an amendment to the Police Act which gave wide, sweeping powers to the Ontario Police Commission. When, ironically, today we have a bill dealing with organized crime, Mr Cass put forward a bill trying to deal with organized crime as well. But his bill was hastily conceived and, as I understand it from the stories I heard, not very well vetted through a cabinet or a committee process behind the scenes before it surfaced. It gave the power to interrogate people in secret, and that bill received great resistance and led to Mr Cass's resignation some seven or eight days later.

Between 1964 and 1968, Fred continued to represent the people of Grenville-Dundas in the Legislature, and in 1968 he was made Speaker of the Legislature by then-Premier Robarts, as the Speaker was not elected at that time but was appointed by the Premier who was there.

Fred Cass was 87 when he died, but he remained active in politics after he retired in 1971. I had the pleasure of representing part of this riding when I was first elected in 1977, and that was the county of Grenville. One of the things Fred Cass had, which I guess was a throwback to the old days, was that every so often I would give a speech in the Legislature and I would receive a note from Fred Cass congratulating me or commenting on that particular speech. It was a practice of his, I guess an old-time politic practice, to write notes to a number of people, municipal councillors, congratulating and encouraging them in whatever they did.

It would really not be fair to either the memory of Fred Cass or to his wife, Olive, if she was not included in this eulogy to Fred Cass. While Fred Cass was the stomper—he was a great Speaker—while he was the man who came to Queen's Park, while he was the man who assumed many significant cabinet portfolios and assumed the speakership of this Legislature, it was Olive Cass who was the constituency person. She was the person who dealt with constituents' problems—this was before members had constituency offices or constituency assistants—and Olive Cass was known throughout the riding as well as Fred Cass. Many suggested in jest that Olive Cass had more to do with the election of Fred Cass than Fred Cass himself because she was such a wonderful person in terms of getting along with individuals and with her community.

Fred McIntosh Cass served in World War II for his country, he served in this Legislature in a noble manner and with integrity, he worked hard in this Legislature for the people of Ontario and he worked hard for the people of Grenville-Dundas and the people of eastern Ontario as well. I would like to express our condolences to his family, his sister and brother who still remain. Fred and Olive never had children but I can tell you this: the people of eastern Ontario will be long in remembering his contribution, his kindness and the kindness of his wife, Olive, and their service to this province.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I and my colleagues in the Liberal Party are very pleased and honoured to associate ourselves with the very kind remarks of the government House leader about the death of Mr Speaker Cass. Mr Sterling has very eloquently captured much of the essence of a very distinguished public career.

Mr Cass was a serious, fair-minded, no-nonsense Speaker of this Legislature in the period from 1968 to 1971. His speakership was also substantially improved by the wonderful assistance he received from his wife, Olive. She was herself the daughter of W.H. Casselman, a former member of the Legislature for Dundas county and a bearer of one of the great political names in our part of southeastern Ontario.

Fred, as Mr Sterling has observed, had a very distinguished war record overseas between 1941 and 1945. But I think it is fair to say that in the annals of the political history and legislative history of this place, Frederick McIntosh Cass will be known for a series of events that occurred in the third week of March 1964. I think it is fair to say that those events were sensational. I see Mr Eric Dowd in the gallery. He's the only person around here who will remember those events.

Fred Cass was elected, as Norm Sterling said, in 1955, went quickly to cabinet, served very ably at highways and municipal affairs, and was known as the government's troubleshooter; he was known as the fireman. So it was no surprise that after the leadership campaign in 1961 the new Premier, Mr Robarts, assigned Mr Cass to the Attorney General's job, at a time, as the government House leader has rightly observed, when organized crime was a major issue and challenge to the then provincial government. The Roach commission had just reported and there were clearly problems.

And so, I think it was around March 19, 1964, the Attorney General, Mr Cass, brought forward amendments to the Police Act. It wasn't so much the amendments—I want all members to understand this because it's a very good lesson to all of us. The amendments weren't themselves controversial. It was what Mr Cass said about the amendments. When questioned by the press, the Attorney General said, "Yes, these are drastic, draconian measures that in some ways are really unbelievable in a country that has an English common law system." You can imagine any Attorney General saying that about legislation.

As Mr Sterling has said, those amendments gave the Ontario Police Commission the power to haul witnesses in camera and cross-examine those individuals in camera, in circumstances that were clearly at variance with the English common law tradition of Ontario.

There was a storm. There's a famous story about Mr Robarts being at a press gallery dinner during the next day or two at the Royal York. The Toronto Globe and Mail was beside itself with front page coverage. A relatively new member of the opposition with an Irish accent—a Liberal from I think Toronto-Dovercourt named Andy Thompson—made a very famous speech

about that Bill 99, a bill that destroyed the ministerial career of Fred Cass, unfortunately, and made the career of Andy Thompson. That one speech made Thompson a frontrunner for the leadership of the Ontario Liberal Party, which was to have been decided a few months later, I think in September or October 1964.

Bill 99 was not all bad, of course, because out of that unfortunate set of circumstances the Robarts government appointed the McRuer commission on civil rights and a great deal of very beneficial legislation and practice ensued from that sensational set of events in 1964.

I say again that Fred Cass, as Mr Sterling has rightly observed, served his province and his country with great distinction in the courts, in the Legislature—notwithstanding the famous Bill 99 flap—and he is rightly remembered here today as someone to whom we owe a great debt of gratitude. I join the government House leader in expressing our condolences to his family.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I am pleased to rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to express our condolences and to remember Fred Cass. There's no one in our caucus, actually, who served with Speaker Cass, but it doesn't take too long, in going through his resumé and certainly listening to the words of the previous speakers, to understand that Fred Cass made a significant contribution—obviously an individual of great talent, determination, much capacity for compassion and caring as well as vision, given the ministries that he was asked to be responsible for.

He was a member of this Legislature from 1955 to 1971. That's 16 years. That alone says a lot about the ability of an individual to reflect the views and concerns and needs of their community. As has been mentioned, having been the minister of highways and of municipal affairs, and ultimately the Attorney General, speaks to the confidence that the government and Premiers of the day had in Mr Cass.

Mr Conway raised the issue, and I wanted to just focus on it a bit more and put the actual quote into the record, of what happened in 1964. I agree it's very interesting and surprising that the government doesn't learn more from the past when they take a look at what happened in an incident similar to what's happening here in terms of trying to respond to legitimate issues in perhaps what may be called an illegitimate way.

When he was asked whether or not his Bill 99 threatened individual rights, the actual quote is that "The bill is drastic, it is dangerous, it is new, and it is terrible legislation in an English common law country." That touched off such a storm that ultimately the government backed an NDP-moved amendment that withdrew the language that I just referred to. And when his letter of resignation was read into the House, he said that he had "unintentionally touched upon the sensibilities of the public"—perhaps words and sentiments that all governments would be wise to bear in mind when we move into these areas of denying civil rights on the basis of the broader good.

Before I close, I also think it was interesting that while he was Speaker he came out with a ruling. Now, during the time I have been here we have had some interesting times regarding Speakers' rulings. It was during the time of his speakership that he determined that opposition members could no longer begin their questions during question period with the word "why." The reason, he said, was that the questions were "usually not aimed at soliciting information from cabinet ministers but at giving the questioner an opening to catalogue his complaints about the government." As an opposition member, I don't know what the Speaker's problem was, quite frankly. But when we look at the times that this happened in, apparently it was great sport to watch the verbal gymnastics performed on this side of the House as opposition members tried to find a way to say "why" without saying "why."

He was obviously an individual very much deserving of the time we spend here today reflecting on his career and his contributions to the province of Ontario. On behalf of all members of the NDP caucus, again we express our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Speaker Fred Cass.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank all the members for their very kind comments and I will ensure that copies go to the family.

DEFERRED VOTES

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 119, An Act to reduce red tape, to promote good government through better management of Ministries and agencies and to improve customer service by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts / *Projet de loi 119, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives, à promouvoir un bon gouvernement par une meilleure gestion des ministères et organismes et à améliorer le service à la clientèle en modifiant ou abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant deux nouvelles lois.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1444 to 1449.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony

Hardeman, Ernie
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Kells, Morley

Runciman, Robert W.
Snobelen, John
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.

Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder

Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J

Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Conway, Sean G.

Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Marchese, Rosario

Martel, Shelley
Martin, Tony
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 38.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): In the absence of the Premier and the Deputy Premier, I have a question for Guy Giorno.

My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Minister, we believe there is considerably more we can do to help the families in Walkerton. Today the people of Walkerton have been told their water is safe. They've been told to go ahead, turn on the tap and drink.

I'm sure you can understand it's going to take some time for families there, and children in particular, to adjust to this new reality. For 29 weeks, Walkerton families, and parents in particular, have been telling their children, "Don't go near the taps. Don't drink the stuff. If you do, you'll get very sick and you could even die."

The experts may tell us the water is safe, but it's going to take some time for families to regain confidence in their new water supply. A resident there talked about the importance of having an emotional weaning process. I think the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances is allow for a transition, and that means we need a guarantee from you for the people of Walkerton that you'll supply them with a six-month supply of bottled water.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): As everyone is aware, what occurred in Walkerton is truly a tragedy. Our thoughts continue to be with the families who have suffered so much through this ordeal. Last spring the Premier pledged to help the people of Walkerton with all the necessary resources of the Ontario government to provide immediate help. I'd like to thank those in the community and those in the province who have worked so hard to help turn Walkerton's water back on.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I can appreciate that you read that note exactly as it was written, but I need you to think about this matter. People in Walkerton are going to have considerable difficulty adjusting. What residents have been saying to my office is that they'd like to have a six-month transition period. They think that's only fair in the circumstances. A tragedy befell that community: 3,200 people got sick, seven people died, all kinds of people are suffering from permanent kidney failure.

We think what we should be doing in the circumstances—we think it's only fair; we think we owe this to the people of Walkerton—is providing them with a six-month supply of bottled water. Don't you think that's fair, Minister?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'm not sure, as the member says, that we have a monopoly on what's good for the people of Walkerton sitting here at Queen's Park inside this Legislature.

What our government has tried to do is to work with the people of Walkerton. If the mayor and the local committee of health feel they want bottled water for an extended period of time, we will definitely work with them. But I want to thank those people who have suffered through this tragedy, the community and their families who have worked hard to make sure the water is turned back on, the medical officer of health, the local PUC, the Ministry of the Environment's employees and all the people of Walkerton. They've got the water back on. If they want to keep bottled water and they come to us and say they need a little more assistance, we'll definitely work with them.

Mr McGuinty: They don't want your thanks, they want your help, and I'm making that request on their behalf right now.

There's something else that you might do in order to help the people of Walkerton.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): When do you speak on behalf of the people of Walkerton?

The Speaker: Stop the clock. The minister responsible for children, come to order. When I yell "Order," I expect to have some order.

Hon Mrs Marland: It makes me mad.

The Speaker: This is your last warning now, or you'll be named. We're not going to have any arguments in here when I stand up and warn you. This is your last warning. We're not going to have any debate.

Final supplementary. Sorry for the interruption.

Mr McGuinty: There's something else that I believe you should be doing to help out the people of Walkerton. We owe them a full health impact study. Families are complaining of a number of physical ailments and conditions as a result of drinking poisoned water. They're talking about having vision problems; they're talking about having skin irritations; they're talking about miscarriages. We know there are 27 people who are suffering from hemolytic uremic syndrome. That's a potentially fatal kidney disease. Most of these sufferers are children, and we now know that most of those will have to be on dialysis for the rest of their lives.

We think the most important thing you can do in light of those circumstances, Minister, is provide for a complete health impact study. What we should be doing is ensuring that your government is in a position to meet the very special needs of the people in Walkerton as a result of drinking poisoned water. Are you prepared to require that we have a health impact study to assess the special needs of the people of Walkerton and to make sure your government is in a position to meet those needs?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned earlier to the Leader of the Opposition, what occurred in Walkerton was a true tragedy. Our thoughts continue to be with the families who have suffered so much through this ordeal, and we will continue to honour our Premier's pledge to the people of Walkerton that all necessary resources of the Ontario government will be made available.

We're working with the local medical officer of health, and if that's what the local medical officer of health feels is needed, I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition knows that this government, based on our record of helping the families and the people of Walkerton, will continue to be there for them.

NURSING PROGRAMS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. Minister, you will now know that Ontario faces a serious nursing shortage. What that means is that we're now looking at long waits at our hospitals, we're looking at cancelled and delayed surgeries, we're looking at ambulances being turned away, and we are looking at families going without the home care they so desperately need. The problem is going to get worse. We are now told that as many as 40% of our current nurses will be eligible to retire in the next 10 years.

Minister, can you tell us how many new, additional nursing spaces you have added to Ontario's colleges and universities on your watch?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): We have been working with the task force. We agreed during the campaign that we would begin a new program in 2001, in time to have the nurses in their places for 2005. I believe the Liberals agreed to the same task force report. We will probably be

finishing up the collaborative program negotiations in another couple of weeks.

1500

Mr McGuinty: As loath as you may be to admit it, Minister, the truth is you haven't increased spaces in Ontario, you have cut them. According to a March 2000 report, on your watch the number of first-year nursing students in our colleges has dropped by 1,250, a drop of 30%. The number of nursing students in university is down 10%. The Ontario College of Nurses says there are more nurses retiring today than graduating. That means that not only are we in the worst position in all of Canada, but we're falling further behind.

Here's a quote from your own chief nursing officer, Kathleen MacMillan: "The predicted shortage is absolutely immense in scale." Nurses are now telling us we're going to need 60,000 to 90,000 nurses in the next 12 years. I'm wondering if you understand you have a very important responsibility when it comes to addressing our nursing shortage in Ontario. I want to ask you again—you've been on the job for some time now—how many new additional spaces have you added to date to Ontario's college and university nursing programs?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: What the Leader of the Opposition is telling this House is something we've known for a long time. We have exactly the same challenge across many sectors of the economy in Ontario as across North America. In order to support a new baccalaureate nursing program, we are establishing the collaborative college nursing programs leading to the degrees. These are new programs with our colleges and universities. This year, 2000-01, we provided \$10 million in one-time start-up and expansion grants to support the cost of moving to these collaborative programs.

We are working with the College of Nurses, with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and with our colleges and universities. This is what they asked for, and this is what we're doing.

Mr McGuinty: Why not just tell us you haven't added a single new space? That would be the honest thing to do. Tell us you have not added a single new nursing space to Ontario's colleges and universities on your watch.

Let's back this up a little. This government, understanding that a nursing shortage was imminent—on the not-too-distant horizon—proceeded recklessly to fire thousands of nurses. To make matters worse, you in your bailiwick, in your ministry, failed to make the necessary plans to begin to expand dramatically to make sure we've got enough nurses graduating here in Ontario. We know that to date you have done nothing to add new spaces.

My next question for you is, how many more spaces will you be adding to Ontario's nursing schools and when?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I would like to give the member the numbers we are negotiating, but we won't be making them final for another week or two. If I thought the member was truly interested and that giving out

numbers that haven't been confirmed would help this province, I would do so. But I'm not going to do that.

What I will do is say there is a group of people in Ontario who would like to do nursing. For that reason, we have set up an academic credential assessment service to assess foreign secondary and post-secondary educational qualifications against Ontario standards. It's very important that every person who lives in this province and is qualified to nurse, who may have come from another country, is assessed immediately so that we can get them into the profession. This will help skilled newcomer nurses enter the labour force quickly. We're working on all fronts to get nurses for the people of Ontario.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Deputy Premier and it is this: we want to know and need to know what is going on within the ministry of corrections under your government. You know that it is contrary to the criminal law of Canada for anyone to identify by name a young offender, to identify a young person who has been charged or convicted of a criminal offence. Not only did officials in your ministry print a list of names of young offenders, but you then distributed it. Mr Galt, one of your parliamentary assistants, was invited to this, was given a printed list with the names of young offenders. This is outrageous.

I want to know what you or the Premier has done to find out who in the ministry of corrections is responsible for this outrageous conduct and this complete disregard for the criminal law of Canada?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): First of all, I think the leader of the third party would be well advised to wait until the facts are found out before he decides to invent the facts or tell us what they are. Number two, I would hope that most members of this Legislature, if not all members of this Legislature, would recognize the fact that Mr Galt, upon realizing that he made a mistake, did the proper and honourable thing and he did it immediately, as did the minister.

Mr Hampton: Deputy Premier, I'm not so concerned about Mr Galt. Hopefully, the police will deal with Mr Galt. I'm concerned about how your government is running the ministry of corrections. I'm simply taking the statements that Mr Galt made publicly. He indicated that there was a list of young offenders, that he was given the list of the young offenders, that he was invited to a ceremony at a young offenders' facility, that other members of the public were invited to attend this so-called ceremony at a young offenders' facility where young offenders' names were printed and distributed on a list.

My question to you is—it would seem to any of us here that there are several obvious breaches of the criminal law of Canada—what are you doing, you the government that lectures people from one end of the

province to the other about law and order, to hold your own government accountable?

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member, I'm sure, having been a former Attorney General, is quite aware that the standard procedure in these matters is to refer this issue to the assistant deputy minister in the Attorney General's ministry, who will launch a proper investigation to find out what went on. That person obviously is a career civil servant; they are not a political entity. That was the proper procedure when he was the Attorney General and it's the proper procedure when Mr Flaherty is the Attorney General.

Mr Hampton: That is the proper procedure for the commencement of a criminal investigation, but it would appear from the facts we know from the admissions of Mr Galt in the Legislature yesterday and afterwards that there is a whole series of systemic things in the ministry of corrections that no government could abide by. The responsibility of the ministry of corrections is to enforce the criminal law, not put in place processes which would seem to lead inevitably to several breaches of the criminal law.

To put it to you bluntly, we are told that this whole process that happened at Brookside was driven out of the minister's office, that this was no accidental slip-up; that the printed list—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member take his seat. Order. Sorry for the interruption.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Scarborough East, this is his last warning. Sorry, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: —that the printed list was no accident; that the list of members of the public, who should never be invited, was no accident; that Mr Galt being there was no accident. So I'm asking you, as a government that lectures people—you are all set to condemn people on social assistance; you're all set to go after people on workers' compensation—what have you done to look within the ministry of corrections to see what could so badly go off the trail, what could so badly be in breach of the criminal law? What are you doing to hold your own government accountable, Deputy Premier?

1510

Hon Mr Eves: The Deputy Minister of Correctional Services is launching a review of the entire matter as well. The leader of the third party, quite frankly, is talking about innuendo; he's talking about rumour; he's talking about "somebody told me," etc. I suggest that he let this procedure follow its natural course. The two individuals in this case acted very honourably. They did the proper thing. I wish the members opposite would acknowledge that. I've been in this place for almost 20 years and I can tell you that hasn't always been the case when ministers of the crown have done something incorrectly.

The Speaker: New question? Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: Again to the Deputy Premier, these are simple questions: who in your government approved the printing of a list of young offenders, the same list of young offenders that was referred to by Mr Galt yesterday in this Legislature and afterwards when he talked to reporters? Who made the decision to print and distribute that list? Who made the decision to invite members of the public and give them copies of the list? What have you done to get copies of that list back since, as Mr Galt points out, the list was distributed to other members of the public besides him? What have you done, Deputy Premier, to repair the damage that was obviously done? And don't tell us about another criminal investigation. What are you doing to hold your own government accountable?

Hon Mr Eves: When the investigation and the inquiry into these things is concluded, we will then have the facts and we'll be able to deal with them. The leader of the third party insists on inventing facts, manufacturing facts and talking about facts through rumour and innuendo. Why don't you just wait until the facts come out and then we can talk about the facts.

Mr Hampton: Deputy Premier, if you were truly interested in government accountability, if you were truly interested in your government complying with the criminal law as you lecture that other people should comply with the criminal law, you'd be asking those very questions. You'd be asking, "Who came up with the inane idea to print a list of young offenders and distribute it?" You'd be asking, "Who invited members of the public to come to this facility when that would obviously be a breach of the Criminal Code?" and you'd be out there trying to recover that list before it gets further in the public.

And you'd be doing something else: you would be scrapping the very act, the very bill that was under discussion here, the so-called Corrections Accountability Act, because if you can't run the system now, you won't be able to run it at all when you put it in the hands of your private sector corporate friends.

You should be doing all those things. Will you?

Hon Mr Eves: Does the leader of the third party think an investigation from the Deputy Attorney General is improper? Is that an inappropriate way to proceed? Why won't you let that individual complete the investigation, come up with the facts, and then we would be more than happy to discuss the facts in this chamber. That is the proper procedure. It was the proper procedure when you were the Attorney General and it's the proper procedure today.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Minister of Finance. I have in my hand the year 2000 annual report of the Provincial Auditor. He has a lot to say in this report about the operations of the new electricity market in Ontario. The auditor tells us, for example, that in the fiscal year ending

March 31, 2000, the net impact to the provincial government is a loss of \$354 million because, of course, expenses were higher than expected and revenues were lower than expected. Then the auditor goes on to tell us and to tell the Legislature that he has looked at the plan of the government to retire the \$20 billion worth of stranded debt and he concludes that there are some additional risks to Ontario taxpayers from the plan that the government and the successor companies have in place.

My question to you, Minister of Finance, is simply this: given that in year one the government lost \$354 million in this matter, can you tell us how the report of the Provincial Auditor highlighting these losses is good news for electricity customers in the province of Ontario?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): First of all, I'm sure if the honourable member reads further he will find out that in a couple of short years there will be a huge surplus with respect to this amount.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: That's quite true. We changed the structure of Hydro as we know it. It's now become a commercial entity. There are three separate companies. I'm sure the honourable member knows all that. I guess we could go back to the days when his party was in power or when the NDP were in power and we could go back to the days when the taxpayers of Ontario were on the hook for every single thing that Ontario Hydro did with respect to—

Interjection: They still are.

Hon Mr Eves: They are not, with all due respect, if you knew what you were talking about. Hydro One, for example, went out and financed \$1 billion on its own, without the backing of the province of Ontario. If you knew what you were talking about, you wouldn't utter such nonsense. They are out there on their own, rated by the credit rating agencies on their own, and the credit rating agencies, I might add, included all this stuff in their comment on—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Minister of Finance's time is up.

Mr Conway: Minister, I was there; I heard the auditor. I've read his report and I listened to what he said. It's clear that after year one, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2000, the government has lost an additional 354 million bucks. The auditor tells us that given the long-term plan to retire the \$20 billion worth of stranded debt, it is the auditor's professional opinion that there is an additional exposure to Ontario taxpayers.

My question remains this: having a view to the interest of hydro or electricity ratepayers, residential, industrial and commercial, can you tell us that a year from now, Minister, the auditor is not going to be here reporting that we've lost hundreds of millions more dollars and that this kind of loss and borrowing is not going to do what appears to be obviously the case—that electricity rates for all classes of Ontario electricity customers, residential, industrial and commercial, are going up, and they're

probably, and sadly, going to go up sharply once the market is opened sometime in the year 2001?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, the number that we're talking about here is debt that was already owed by Ontario Hydro, and was already owed, with all due respect, by the taxpayers of Ontario. There's no new \$354 million that's popping out like a jack-in-the-box that wasn't there before. So understand that.

Number two, Hydro's stranded debt. I note you didn't read some of these parts of the auditor's report:

"We requested that the Ministry of Finance, in consultation with us, arrange for an independent review to be conducted of the assumptions underlying the long-term plan to defease the stranded debt of OEFC. The result of that review and the cash provided by the government to OEFC allowed us to conclude that OEFC was a 'going concern' as at March 31, 2000. The plan's long-term cash flow projections indicate defeasance of the stranded debt by 2017 from dedicated revenues from the electricity sector."

That's what we're doing. You were going to have it go on forever.

TUBERCULOSIS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I find worrisome media reports of a man who is infected with tuberculosis. This man immigrated to Canada in December 1999, as I understand, and my concern is that he's been living in Hamilton ever since with this infectious disease. Minister, what is the health screening process for immigrants? Secondly, what went wrong? What happened in this particular case? I'm receiving concerns from people in Haldimand-Norfolk.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In response to the question from the member, I would like to indicate to him that the responsibility for the health screening of all potential immigrants resides with the federal government, and specifically with the Ministry of Citizen and Immigration Canada. All potential immigrants coming to this country are required to undergo a thorough medical examination prior to their arrival in Canada. Active TB is a reason for someone to be denied admission to Canada.

It is my understanding that in this particular situation there had been a medical exam that did take place. I understand that the federal government has acknowledged responsibility that there obviously was a gap in the screening process.

1520

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Minister, for explaining the role of the federal government in health screening of immigrants through Citizenship and Immigration Canada. I wish to also ask, what role does the provincial government play with respect to not only the prevention but also the treatment of tuberculosis? Secondly, are we assisting the local health unit in Hamilton?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would like to strongly support the decision that's been made by the federal government that they completely review the screening process that is in place. I think it is absolutely necessary that we protect the public safety of people living not only in Ontario but in all of Canada, and I'm pleased to see that they are going to move forward.

In the case of our responsibility, our chief medical officer has been in touch with the local medical officer of health in the Hamilton community. We have offered our assistance in any way possible. I'm also pleased to say that we continue to pay 100% of the cost of any drugs in the treatment and prevention of TB and will continue to do this. As well, I'd like to note that in the past budget, the finance minister acknowledged that we were putting aside an additional \$1 million in order to ensure that people who didn't have health insurance could be treated if they needed—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health on the same issue. Clearly, as you are aware, there's a serious health crisis in our community. This is a potentially deadly type of tuberculosis that was brought into the Hamilton area. There's a real concern in the region as to the ability of the city of Hamilton health department to properly carry this out with the financial limitations and resources they now have. As you know, 35 people have tested positive for the virus. There is going to have to be testing of about 1,400 people through all of this.

The federal government has a responsibility. I have made a call for inquiries as to the role of the federal government. I believe they must take some responsibility. It is not a question of pointing fingers or blame. I think there's plenty of time for that later. It's a question now of substantially helping the city of Hamilton and the region deal with this problem and deal with what is going to be a heavy financial burden from the point of view of the staffing. Eleven staff people to this point have been used full-time to track this disease. Many more are going to be needed. This is a serious problem we are facing.

Minister, I ask you today, will you commit to the necessary financial resources from the provincial government to deal with this issue and to pass that on to the city and the region of Hamilton-Wentworth so they can take all of the extensive testing and follow-up that is necessary to make sure we track and treat all of the individuals involved? Can you commit today to financial assistance for the region and the city to deal with this problem?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again, we need to make it clear that at issue here is a need for all three levels of government to continue to work co-operatively together. Unfortunately, the screening process that is presently in place didn't detect this case and there was not the appropriate follow-up. There was a case that slipped through the cracks of the federal screening process that presently takes place. I think I've indicated that the

federal government acknowledges this and is prepared to undertake a review.

In our case, we are working very co-operatively with the municipality. As I say, our chief medical officer has offered our help and our assistance. I'm very pleased to say that we are continuing to provide 50% of the funding in the attempt to track down the individuals who may potentially be infected.

Mr Agostino: Again, the minister is talking about a previous budget that had been allocated without anyone believing there would be an outbreak that could affect up to 1,400 people, if not more, people in our region. The region doesn't have the financial ability right now to do this work.

My office spoke to the medical officer of health about an hour or an hour and a half ago. Frankly, they've been asking for help since November. There hasn't been one additional cent committed. We need help. They need to hire more people. We need more nurses, we need more clinical specialists to deal with this problem, and the resources are not there. Not only do we need human resources from the provincial government, the estimated cost at this point is \$1.4 million to simply track and follow up on the individuals who may have been exposed to the disease. That is \$1.4 million for this year and another \$1.4 next year.

They have not budgeted for that, Minister, and neither have you—your acknowledgement of only \$1 million in the last budget for the whole province of Ontario. Significantly more than that is needed for the city of Hamilton.

Minister, I am not blaming your government for this. That's not the intent here today. We understand there are other levels of government that are responsible. I am coming to you and pleading with you to give us a commitment today that you are going to commit yourself and your government to financially helping out, covering the costs, and giving us the human resources that are necessary for the region to deal with this problem. It's \$1.4 million they don't have. This is a serious health issue. It's a serious community issue.

Minister, in a non-partisan, non-political manner I am asking you today, will you commit the province of Ontario to the \$1.4 million that is necessary for the city of Hamilton to deal at this point with this disease?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Despite what may be said here, I think there is a bit of an attempt being made to politicize this issue. I've stressed now in my responses that we and the chief medical officer of health for the province are working co-operatively with the local public health unit. We have offered our assistance in any way we can help. I think we've made it abundantly clear and I feel very confident that, if there is a need for additional assistance, that decision will be reached and it will be reached by people who obviously have first-hand knowledge of what is necessary.

Let me again add that our finance minister this past year made available, because we do place a high priority on public health and safety, one million additional dollars

to ensure that people in this province who didn't have access to OHIP and health insurance could receive the treatment they received.

We also provide 100% of—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

SCHOOL TEACHERS

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): My question today is for the Minister of Education. This past week, officials from the New York City Board of Education were in Toronto on a recruitment drive. It appears the New York City Board of Education is facing a teacher shortage. This is worrisome, because in addition to seeing other jurisdictions possibly raid our fine teachers, we know we're facing some challenges, some demographic issues, for instance, not only in education but in the field of health and others. Minister, for my constituents in Guelph-Wellington and for members here in the House, can you tell me what actions the government is taking to ensure Ontario has enough teachers for its education system?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): It's interesting that the opposition, which likes to say they support teachers, when my honourable colleague stands up and says something about fine teachers in Ontario, we hear hoots and hollers from the Liberal caucus over there. They were laughing. The member for Windsor-St Clair and many others were laughing about that, and that says where they're coming from on this issue.

At my most recent meeting with the Ontario Teachers' Federation, one of my regular meetings, the issue of teacher retention was very much one of the key agenda items, because Ontario, like other provinces in Canada, like other jurisdictions in North America, is facing a teacher shortage. As a matter of fact, we have European countries as well that are facing teacher shortages, as we're facing shortages in many other professions. One of the things we are doing to help keep teachers here is expanding the number of spots in teachers' faculties by some 6,000 to take advantage of—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

Mrs Elliott: This is a very serious issue that is certainly of concern to my constituents. Having enough teachers is important, but what is also important to parents, students and teachers in my riding is having teachers who are well-trained in their specific areas of instruction. I know that in some jurisdictions, as you mentioned, for instance, in Britain as well, overall improved teacher training has been a priority of their government.

In addition to making sure we have enough teachers in our classes, do we need to do more to address the new challenges of teacher training for our modern classrooms?

1530

Hon Mrs Ecker: As I mentioned, we not only have expanded spots in teachers' colleges for the increase in applicants—the number of people in Ontario who want to be teachers—but we're targeting those to some of the specific areas of expertise in the teaching profession where we are experiencing more shortages, to try to work with them to stop that. Secondly, one of the other things the Ontario Teachers' Federation and the government have talked about is the issue of retention, so that when a young person or someone who is changing careers comes into the teaching profession, they get the support they need to stay in the profession.

One of the initiatives we've been working on with the education sector and are going to be unveiling is an internship program, much like we have for physicians, to make sure new teachers can get the support they need. Some boards have been good on this, but others have not been as good. We want to make sure all our new teachers have that kind of support.

But one of the things—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Deputy Premier again, I'm not concerned about a criminal investigation, which is likely to take place; I'm concerned about what appear to be such obvious transgressions within the ministry of corrections. Surely you would agree with me that no member of the public should ever receive a printed list with the names of young offenders on it—no member of the public and no backbencher in your government. No member of the public should ever be invited to a public ceremony where the identities of young offenders are open to the public. Mr Galt told us that was the circumstance. Sources from within the Brookside Youth Centre told us today that was the circumstance. They also told us the assistant deputy minister of corrections, Deborah Newman, was there. It's incredible that these things could have happened.

My question is, what are you as the Deputy Premier doing to ensure these things don't happen again, that your government doesn't fall outside the law again? What are you doing to make sure that doesn't happen?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): My answer is the same as the answers I gave to his previous two questions. First of all, I think we should wait to see the results of the investigation. Both the deputy minister of corrections and the assistant deputy minister in the Attorney General's office have been asked to look into the matter. I suppose it's nice to speculate about what the facts may or may not be. Why don't we just wait until those investigations and reviews are complete, and then we can discuss the matter with the facts?

Mr Hampton: There's an obvious problem here. If the assistant deputy minister of corrections was indeed at this event, if all this was happening before her very eyes, then it doesn't make much sense to have the assistant deputy minister of corrections presiding over an investigation or over any process that tries to discover what went wrong.

If the minister—and we are told from sources within Brookside that the minister was also on the list of invited guests. If this originated from the minister's office, then it seems to me that if you're going to get to the bottom of this and are going to ensure your government is held accountable, you have to bring in someone from outside to look at what was happening.

I repeat my question. This is not the first time your government has fallen outside the criminal law of Canada with respect to the Young Offenders Act. It's the second time. Mr Runciman was the first. What is going on in the ministry of corrections under your government that this happened, and what are you going to do to ensure it doesn't happen again?

Hon Mr Eves: In the honourable member's question, the very fact that he thinks Mr Runciman was guilty of some criminal conduct is exactly the type of speculation I'm talking about, and exactly why we should wait until we have the facts. You're wrong about that and undoubtedly you'll probably be wrong about this as well.

ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Now it is very apparent why you made the announcement of the long-awaited academic credential assessment service just a few days before the Legislature opened. You simply didn't have the guts to face us here to make the announcement, where it should have been made, because of the contract that you've given out.

Let me refresh your memory. You had four bidders for this academic credential assessment service: York University and the Toronto District School Board, the University of Toronto assessment service, York regional school board and the International Credential Evaluation Service, and a New York-based company called World Education Services. Of these four bidders, three are Canadian and one is from the US. You gave the contract to the New York company. Therefore, you gave the distinct impression that our Canadian companies are simply not good enough to provide the service.

Minister, do you believe that our own institutions which have done this service for years are not good enough to provide this academic credential assessment service?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): This was a bidding process, and the company that won the bid was the one deemed to be able to do the job best. We went to the opening. Many people, a year and a half later, celebrated this great service, which our immigrant population have been

waiting for for a long time. A year and a half later I don't know why I'm getting the question.

Mr Ruprecht: This is really outrageous. Just because you are going to the opening of the academic assessment service doesn't necessarily mean you're doing something about it. What you did earlier with my leader's question, saying, "Yes, we have the academic credential assessment service," and that somehow should make it easier to get nurses in here is actually totally wrong. It's your failure to provide enough nursing in Ontario. Don't use that as a deflective shield of saying something to us over here which simply isn't true.

My question is the following.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member can't say that. He's going to have to withdraw that. You're not allowed to say that. Withdraw it or I'm going to name you.

Mr Ruprecht: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Last year, Ontario took in 120,000 immigrants, over 4,000 of whom have a professional degree or certificate. But unfortunately, as the minister knows, these people who have this degree or certificate are unable to practise. Why? The reason is simple. It's in the report commissioned by Price Waterhouse in 1998, and that report is in your desk; you've got it in front of you. You know what it says: "Regulatory bodies are not using a standard and consistent methodology." Do you know what else? The former Minister of Citizenship, who is no longer with us, adds, "We have not gone far enough to accommodate people who come here seeking to use their professional skills." This really is code language for saying the door is shut to newcomers, who are unable to practise.

Minister, you are sitting on your hands and you're sitting on the report, which includes recommendations you should implement. Please get off your hands. Go back to—

The Speaker: Minister. Order. The member's time is up.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: With respect, I hope I've got the question right. Number one, every way possible that we can get more nurses into the profession, I think the member opposite would want us to try. That's why I mentioned today that we did open the academic credential assessment service. World Education Services did in fact meet the demands. We all celebrated this in this House. I'm looking at your colleague when I say this. That's the first part of the answer.

The second part is this: I think he might have been saying to me that there are more ways, in fact, to get immigrants into the country who are qualified to be nurses. Not long ago I met with the federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Elinor Caplan. We discussed this. We are putting programs out in Ontario offices together and working together to get the requirements to people before they even come to this country.

If there's any other advice the member would like to give me so that we can work with our immigrants to get them into the right profession—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.
1540

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Labour. I would like at this time to thank you on behalf of the member from Oshawa and the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for making yourself available to come to our ridings, to speak to our constituents and, I might say, to the labour leaders who live in our areas. I think you did a great job, and a great service, of trying to unravel some of the mystery around the three bills, Bill 69, Bill 139 and Bill 147. There's a lot of misinformation and misrepresentation of information out there, and I believe your accessibility and your ability to answer questions for my constituents has been a real advantage.

I wonder if you could take a moment today to explain more specifically for the people listening the steps in Bill 147 and the 60 hours. Maybe you could help them understand what the intent of your legislation is.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I thank the member for Durham. Let me just say quickly that the idea that somehow we're changing the maximum workweek from 48 hours is just not the case. The maximum workweek is still 48 hours. It will remain 48 hours if this bill passes. The only thing that's changing is under the old permit system if you wanted to work more than 48 hours, you had to seek a permit from the Ministry of Labour. We have studies that indicate a third of the people didn't even request the permit or seek the permit, so they were in fact contravening the law.

The fact is, there is no recommendation to move to a 60-hour workweek. I appreciate the comments from the member for Durham. We know. We understand what the union bosses out there are saying. We understand what they're trying to get across, but if the truth be known, we're not abolishing any maximum workweek time. It will maintain at 48 hours. If there's agreement between the employee and the employer, they can reshape their week, and we think the public out there is capable of making those decisions on their own.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for that, Minister. I know the members on this side of the House appreciate your accessibility and your ability to explain these three important initiatives. After all, it's really about creating jobs, and that's been our initiative. I know the members from Peterborough and Guelph-Wellington are also very interested in how you can take—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member, take his seat. Stop the clock. Order. I need to be able to hear the question. That way, we'll get to more questions. Member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: I know you're really just trying to make it easier for people to work in Ontario. Perhaps it's not just the 60-hour work issue and the employment stand-

ards issue. Minister, tell us what you're doing to make it easier to get a job in Ontario today.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: The hackles from across the floor. Listen, what we're trying to do to create more work in this province is make labour legislation simpler, more understandable and easier for people to work within.

The question about what we're doing to change the law in the ESA is a good question. I compliment the member for Durham. I took the time to go to Sarnia last Friday and explain it to 600 or 700 union representatives. They themselves in fact sat there and listened, and I think they were somewhat astounded because the information they were getting from their union executive wasn't actually what the bill was going to do.

What we're trying to do with this labour legislation is create a prosperous Ontario, create jobs for people, take people off welfare and take people off unemployment. I would expect this noble goal is a cause the opposition would like—

The Speaker: New question.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Attorney General. On November 9, Ontario Liberals introduced an amendment to your domestic violence protection bill. It was to get rid of the Charlton Heston clause, which lets wife beaters keep their guns. Instead, it would give judges tools so that they could seize weapons before they're used against domestic violence victims. That amendment was shot down and now further debate in committee and further debate in this House on this bill has been shot down by a closure motion. With respect to the former, it was because of the phony argument made by the government that the Criminal Code provision already covered it, when you know, sir, section 111 applies, whereby a police officer appears before a provincial court judge, unlike your bill, whereby a victim appears before a JP or a Superior Court judge.

When are you going to get out of your partisan bunker and stop fighting on behalf of the gun lobby and join this non-partisan effort to try and fight for protection of domestic violence victims?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I have trouble following my honourable friend, and I respond as follows: what he's saying is we need to have strong domestic violence legislation in this province. I think most members of this House would agree that's true. Certainly, the Joint Committee on Domestic Violence which examined this issue made recommendations that are reflected in the bill that's before this House. The objection taken by my friend opposite was with respect to weapons, which are covered by the Criminal Code of Canada in sections 111 and 117, which he knows.

Mr Bryant: I don't understand why this minister hunkers down in his partisan bunker, sniping down constructive ideas on behalf of the gun lobby. First, the

Liberals brought forward a bill that would crack down on phony guns and this minister shot it down. Dalton McGuinty brought forward a proposal to assist Ontario victims of crime and this minister shot it down. Now we've got an amendment that would make the bill more effective. We want to make this bill better, Minister, and now you're shooting it down. The great tragedy is, it is victims who are caught in the crossfire. Would you come out of your partisan bunker? Would you join all three parties and would you say that we're going to fight for victims and we're not going to fight for the gun lobby? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Flaherty: Our concern, of course, is with victims of domestic violence. We have had some terrible tragedies in Ontario this year, including this summer, and I'm sure all members are aware of those. It's for that reason that several months ago now we introduced a very strong piece of legislation in this House called the Domestic Violence Protection Act, which I hope will be returning to the House today.

We have a division of powers in this country between the province and the federal government. The federal government has the criminal law power. The federal government has occupied the field with respect to seizure of weapons in section 111 and section 117 of the Criminal Code. I would have thought the member opposite would understand that. We can work together. With the two pieces of legislation—the piece that I hope passes this House today—together with those provisions of the Criminal Code, our police officers will have the tools they need to combat this serious social evil of domestic violence.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Mr Brian Coburn (Ottawa-Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. In the fall of 1999 the government announced the biotechnology commercialization centre fund, and in June 2000 you announced up to \$5.4 million in funding for the Ottawa Biotechnology Commercialization Centre fund, and I thank you for that because that is helping us realize our vision of that biotechnology cluster in Ottawa.

Yesterday you were in Ottawa to announce the biotechnology commercialization centre. Could you elaborate on the biotechnology and broader life sciences cluster in Ottawa and what we're doing to support the life sciences cluster in that city?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): That's a terrific question, and I'm happy to comment on the life sciences sector in Ottawa. I think most people are very much aware of the tremendous growth Ottawa is experiencing in information technology with companies like Nortel and Oracle etc. The best-kept secret, though, is the tremendous lead that Ottawa is taking in the life sciences area. Yes, we did try and spark the growth of life sciences and biotechnology and move that along by committing \$5.4 million to a new biotechnology incubator. That incubator will incubate in its

first few years about 17 new biotechnology companies for the Ottawa area, and we expect several hundred highly skilled jobs will be created.

People in Ottawa were telling me yesterday that they expect 10% to 15% per year growth each and every year over the next decade, creating some 4,000 new positions. That's an increase of 36% in the life sciences biotechnology sector in the Ottawa area, and we're happy to be part of the partnership in creating those jobs.

Mr Coburn: One more step to making Ottawa the advanced-knowledge capital of the entire country. Biotechnology is even going beyond the boundaries of the city of Ottawa and becoming a larger part of everyone's life on a day-to-day basis. How important is Ontario's biotechnology industry and the role it plays in the future?

Hon Mr Wilson: This government can be proud that even when it wasn't popular we were supporting, and are supporting, biotechnology. It adds tremendous value and quality to our everyday lives here in Ontario and to people's lives across Canada. Indeed, in the Third World, they don't have the opportunity and the high-tech machinery to grow food as we do in North America. Therefore, biotechnology and better crops and food species are very important, and much of that technology is being exported to those countries.

Today, biotechnology in Ontario is about a \$400-million industry. We expect it to grow to \$1 billion over the next decade, creating 6,500 new jobs. Since I've been Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, we've put about \$2 billion worth of new infrastructure into life sciences and research and development in this province. Two billion dollars is almost as much as Jean Chrétien is spending on research and development in the entire country. So this government is helping to—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

1550

ANNUAL REPORT, PROVINCIAL AUDITOR

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Deputy Premier. The auditor's report today clearly highlights the trickery being used by your government to inflate your spending. The auditor has taken exception to your multiyear funding approach, which he says "distorts government financial reporting."

As an example, the auditor pointed out that last year your government said it spent \$1 billion on hospital construction by March 31, 2000, when in fact this money will be spent over four years and will only be spent if Ontario hospitals can find the 30% local share they need for these projects. So it's very clear that your ministry and your government is using this funding to exaggerate your spending.

The auditor has said this practice has to cease. My question is, do you agree with him?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I notice the member of the third

party waited until the finance minister had to leave, but I can assure you—

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Point of order, Mr Speaker: The acting Premier knows he has no right to impugn motive. I ask you to direct that he withdraw that comment.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): All members know we don't refer to anybody being or not being here.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I can assure the member and all members of this Legislature that the auditor signed off on every one of Ernie Eves's budgets and financial statements in his tenure as Treasurer of this province, unlike your party's record when you had qualified decisions all over the place. I can also tell you that our accounting is in accordance with the PSAP rules and it is in line. He has discussed this with the auditor and I'm sure you'd be pleased to know that the auditor does sign off on our books, unlike when you were in government.

MINISTRY WEB SITE

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: Earlier today I wrote to you, pursuant to standing order 21(c). As a member of this assembly, I must be able to access government Web sites knowing I can obtain reliable information on behalf of my constituents. That is a privilege I must enjoy if I'm going to serve my constituents. Reliable, accurate information on government of Ontario Web sites is something all of us must be entitled to.

Today I visited the Ministry of Community and Social Services Web site. Instead of reliable, accurate information, I found partisan political propaganda, which should not be funded by my constituents and other taxpayers.

The lead item on the home page of the ministry Web site is a partisan attack on my leader, Dalton McGuinty. It is inappropriate and inaccurate. It alleges that my leader "turns his back on those truly in need." Nothing could be further from the truth. In the past few weeks he has repeatedly asked the minister to increase supports for people on social assistance and to quit beating up on welfare recipients.

This kind of partisan political propaganda has no place on a government Web site. The government has turned this Web site into a taxpayer-funded propaganda tool. It's certainly an affront to taxpayers and it's also a violation of my privileges as a member of the Legislature.

I should also tell you, Mr Speaker, that the in-house mail service, which is so capably run by your office and the Clerk's office, was compelled to deliver the same release on ministry letterhead to each member's office. It was received at my office in both French and English late yesterday afternoon.

To serve my constituents, I again stress that I must be able to access reliable, accurate information of interest to the public when I visit ministry Web sites. Instead, I and my constituents are encountering partisan political propaganda that has no place on a government Web site.

I would suggest, given the amount of money this party takes from big corporations, that they can well afford to put this kind of propaganda either on PC Party letterhead, or even through PC caucus services, but to pollute the Ministry of Community and Social Services and to draw the very capable administration of this Legislature and its precincts into what amounts to nothing more than a sad example of cheap partisan, inaccurate, ugly grandstanding ought to be unacceptable, sir. I call upon you to review this situation to determine, first, if it's appropriate that a ministry Web page should be allowed to carry such partisan information and, second, to determine if in fact it was an appropriate use of our mail service here in the Legislature to deliver what amounts to a partisan, mean-spirited diatribe against the poor and working poor in this province.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for his point of privilege. I also want to thank him for attaching copies of the Web site. I've asked that to be done. Often what has happened in the past is that by the time we get to the Web site, technology being what it is, it is mysteriously gone. In this case you have it. I appreciate your making a copy of the Web page available. I will reserve my ruling.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a petition to the Ontario Legislature. Northerners are demanding the Harris government eliminate health care apartheid.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation"—that's health care apartheid and that's discrimination;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location"—that's a fact;

"Whereas a recently released Oracle research poll confirms that 92% of Ontarians support equal health travel funding"—that's what you call fairness;

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province;

"Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Lougheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners"—this health care apartheid, this discrimination—"travelling for cancer treatment;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel

expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid"—and the discrimination—"which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition as I am in favour of it, and I give it to Andrew and ask him to bring it to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Pursuant to standing order 30(b), it being 4 of the clock, I am now required to call orders of the day.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

ATTRIBUTION DE TEMPS

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 117, An Act to better protect victims of domestic violence, when the standing committee on justice and social policy next meets for the purpose of considering the bill, the Chair shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a);

That, the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration, and not later than December 12, 2000. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on justice and social policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That when the order for third reading is called, the Speaker shall immediately put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I'd like to address the House with respect to the resumption of this bill, which is the Domestic Violence Protection Act. The reason this bill has come back before this House is that it became deadlocked in the standing

committee on justice and social policy. In that committee we had about two weeks of public hearings, where we heard different groups and organizations address the committee for and against different items in the bill.

At the outset of the Bill 117 committee hearings, all three parties indicated they would be in general support of this bill. In fact, during the debate on second reading in this House, generally speaking, all members who spoke in this House spoke in favour of this bill. The government therefore is frustrated because of the deadlock that has arisen in the committee. The Liberal caucus introduced a number of amendments. The New Democratic caucus introduced none. We are pretty well finished with those amendments, but we clearly are not going to be able to proceed further because of the delays of the opposition and, more specifically, the New Democratic caucus.

As I indicated prior to clause-by-clause, an agreement was reached with all three House leaders. The agreement was based on the understanding that since, as I said, all parties had publicly supported Bill 117, clause-by-clause would be completed in one day. We've now gone two full days. I think we are on section 4, with no sign that we are going to finish the bill. Therefore, to my shock and dismay, I find myself in the Legislature debating this time allocation motion.

I don't believe we would be here doing that if the opposition had not flip-flopped and had kept their word to support victims of domestic abuse by supporting Bill 117. It was during the second day of clause-by-clause that the opposition's true intent to derail, for some unearthly reason, because it was contradictory to what they'd said earlier, our domestic abuse legislation became apparent.

The NDP representative on the committee, Mr Kormos, the member from Niagara, for example, used during that second day two 20-minute recesses, totalling 40 minutes of the committee's time, and it was strictly to his advantage. Clearly, it was his efforts to filibuster that brought us here today. I place it on him, which precluded the committee from concluding its work.

What puzzled me in the House yesterday was that the New Democratic Party raised a recently published book of poems and writings by victims of domestic violence and asked the Premier how far he intends to go to support victims of domestic violence. Really, the question for the NDP is, how far are you prepared to go to support victims of domestic violence? Your actions aren't showing it. Your actions in the committee clearly are not showing it.

One week ago the New Democratic caucus pulled out every procedural trick in the book that it could think of to delay Bill 117 committee hearings, and then the following week they stood up in the House, as they did yesterday, and portrayed themselves as the champions against domestic violence. Usually we criticize the Liberals for this issue of fence-sitting or flip-flopping, but I believe the label of "flip-flop" best describes the

erratic actions of the New Democratic caucus during the domestic violence debate.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: My apologies to the member who was speaking, but I believe I need to get on the record this point of privilege as soon as possible after it happened.

When the Minister of Community and Social Services was leaving the House today he pointed at the Liberal caucus, waved his finger and said in a rather threatening tone, "Don't lobby me for more money. Stop lobbying me for money." I interpreted that to mean that if any of us in the opposition were to come to him for assistance on behalf of a constituent, he's serving notice to us that he won't listen to our pleas on behalf of our constituents.

I believe it was an inappropriate comment. I believe the member was abusing my rights as a member. I would like to put this on the record, Mr Speaker, and invite you to look into the matter. As I say, I find it serious that a minister would say that to the duly elected members of the opposition, particularly with his sensitive position of being an advocate, hopefully, on behalf of some of the most disadvantaged people in Ontario. But to threaten the members and essentially say, "Well, if you were to come to me on behalf of your constituents, I'm not going to help"—I would appreciate it if you would look into the matter.

Hon Mr Klees: On the same point, Mr Speaker: While I did not hear those remarks that were quoted by the member, I can tell you that what I did hear as the minister was leaving the chamber was specifically the member from Parkdale-High Park yelling at the minister and in a very abusive tone saying, "You are a sick man," and a number of other comments that certainly were not befitting a member of this House.

I would say that whatever exchange may have taken place was provoked by the antagonistic approach of the members opposite. I would expect that in any results that take place here, there should be apologies to the minister from the members of the Liberal caucus who abused him as he was leaving the chamber.

1610

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I want to reinforce what my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt has said. After an intervention was made by our House leader, calling quite properly, asking, as is appropriate in this House, for the Speaker's adjudication on a matter relating to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, an obviously agitated minister walked down the stairs and without any provocation from this side whatsoever, because at that point no one had spoken to him, simply said to us, "Don't lobby me for any money. Don't any of your members come to me for any help."

I think that's an abrogation of the kind of decent behaviour that should ensue from any member of the crown. It is such an undermining of the privileges of the members of this House, to think that one action, properly put in the format given to us by this House, to appeal to

the Speaker in his abilities as a neutral arbiter of this House, should then invoke from that minister some kind of retaliatory response to try and intimidate us away from our actions as members of this House.

I want to reinforce that this is a point of privilege in my estimation because my privilege to stand in my place, to vote and to voice concerns on behalf of the people of Parkdale-High Park is undermined by the actions and the words of this minister of the crown. I would hope the Speaker would take this with the seriousness it deserves because I think it sets a terrible precedent if those kinds of remarks can be made in this Legislature and not be subject to sanction, because they stand so far outside the rules, the orders and the expectations we would have for conduct in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): I appreciate the points that have been made and the point of privilege that is being tabled. I understand there's a difference of opinion here as to what was and what wasn't said. None of what has been alleged to be said is on the record so we don't have the privileges of being able to take a look at that. I would ask all honourable members in this place to respect the privilege of each other, as we are expected to do or are wont to do or are understood to be doing when we're sent here by the electorate, and that in future we will act accordingly.

The member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey.

Mr Tilson: I understand the member for Scarborough-Agincourt bringing his point of personal privilege to this House as promptly as he could. The only problem is I'm the one who's suffering because at least four—

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Oh, oh.

Mr Tilson: Well, I'm sorry, but normally the practice with these types of motions is that the time is split among the three caucuses, and I've lost almost five minutes with this little altercation. Mr Speaker, I ask you to restore that to my time.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry, but the standing orders are fairly clear in this instance and the time is divided evenly. This kind of thing comes up from time to time. I have no way of restoring that time, so if the member would continue.

We're losing time as we go through this. The chief government whip.

Hon Mr Klees: I believe, Speaker, that you have a way to restore the time by unanimous consent. I would ask for unanimous consent by all three parties to restore the time.

The Acting Speaker: You're using up the member's time. I understand that. OK, the member for Toronto-Danforth.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There's a closure motion here today that we're debating. I would move unanimous consent to extend this debate into tomorrow so all members can have more time on this important debate. Is that agreed?

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Paul's, quickly.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): That was my point of order as well.

The Acting Speaker: We don't have agreement. The member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey.

Mr Tilson: Somehow six minutes have elapsed.

Interjections.

Mr Tilson: You know, the most noise in this place is being made by the member from the New Democratic caucus. When this legislation was introduced, you indicated that you gave this bill your support. Somehow in the committee it has become quite clear that you're not supporting this legislation, a bill to stop domestic violence. That's why we're in this House: to get on with the bill so that we can stop violence against women in this province. Clearly, the New Democratic caucus has indicated that it does not intend to support Bill 117.

But I'm not going to lay all the blame at the feet of the member from Niagara. I suggest that the Liberal member from St Paul's also shares in the blame for the tactics that have gone on in this committee. It was within his power to submit to his opposition colleague the member from Niagara to stop the legislative shenanigans and delays that were going on in these committees and proceed with the completion of the work of that committee. But he was part of it. He was part of the delays that occurred in that committee. Unfortunately the opposition member from St Paul's and the member from Niagara, I believe, if you watched the committee hearings, have been exposed for playing a shallow game of politics.

It's the government's agenda to move forward with the domestic violence legislation, the first of its kind in this country. It's the opposition's agenda to find ways to stall the legislative process and not to support this critical piece of legislation. That is clearly what the opposition intends to do with this legislation. This government views Bill 117 as initially written as a balanced measure that serves the public interest.

Ontario is a great province. People are working. The economy is booming. We have a quality of life that is envied by many around the world, and part of that quality of life is the sense of comfort and safety that we feel in our communities. The people in Ontario deserve safe communities, and our government is committed to ensuring that they have safe communities in which to live, work and raise a family. Above all, people must be safe in their homes, and unfortunately we cannot take safety in the home for granted in this province. For many, the threat of violence is not from strangers, it's from people they know well. That's why our government continues to take action to help protect victims of domestic violence and to hold abusers accountable for their actions.

The Domestic Violence Protection Act supports these goals. The Domestic Violence Protection Act proposes to reform and improve the effectiveness—

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): On a point of order, Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

The Acting Speaker: Is a quorum present?

Acting Clerk at the Table (Mr Peter Sibenik): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey.

1620

Mr Tilson: The government proposes with this legislation to reform the effectiveness of restraining orders, which many victims seek for protection. Restraining orders are non-criminal court orders that prescribe and/or prohibit contact between alleged abusers and victims of domestic violence. The proposed legislation and changes to current practices in the justice system address the limitations of existing restraining orders and would go a long way to better protecting victims of domestic violence. These reforms in this legislation would replace restraining orders with new intervention orders, allow victims to get intervention orders more quickly and ensure that they are better enforced in an effective, consistent and timely manner across the province.

If passed, this bill would comprehensively define domestic violence to mean:

—An assault that consists of the intentional use of force that causes fear for safety. This does not include acting in self-defence.

—An intentional or reckless act or omission that causes bodily harm or damage to property.

—An act or omission or threatened act or omission that causes fear for safety.

—Forced confinement.

—A series of acts that collectively cause fear for safety, including the following: contacting, communicating with, observing or recording the person.

—Sexual assault, sexual exploitation or sexual molestation, or the threat of these actions.

The bill would help to better protect more victims and their children from domestic violence by making intervention orders available to a broader range of relationships, including persons in dating relationships, current or past persons who have been living together for less than three years and relatives such as elderly parents living with adult children.

The bill would provide clear standards to simplify and speed up the process of getting an intervention order 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

This bill would provide a broader range of supports to help protect the victim from the alleged abuser. For example, an order would clearly specify that the alleged abuser should not communicate directly or indirectly with the victim or other specified people; the specific distance an alleged abuser must be from the victim or particular places, such as the victim's workplace or children's school.

Other terms of an order, depending on the circumstances, might include requiring the alleged abuser to vacate the shared residence; requiring that police are present while the alleged abuser removes personal

possessions; requiring the alleged abuser to give up possession of firearms and weapons that have been used or threatened to be used to commit domestic violence; ordering counselling for the abusive partner to help prevent further violence; recommending counselling for children at the alleged abuser's expense to help them overcome the effects of exposure to the violence; granting the exclusive possession of the residence to the victim, or exclusive use of certain property such as credit cards and bank accounts; and ordering compensation for damage or losses suffered.

By listing specific prohibited activities or other requirements for the alleged abuser, intervention orders would be clear and easier for the police and the courts to enforce.

This bill would also see violations of intervention orders as a criminal offence rather than a provincial offence. This would provide stronger conditions for detention and release of the alleged abuser, thereby increasing the ability to detain an alleged abuser where there is concern for a victim's safety.

Our homes are where we should feel safe and secure, but for many home is the least safe place of all. It is the place where their safety is threatened from within. Domestic violence not only affects the adult victim but also has repercussions for children who witness it in the home. In the broadest sense, domestic violence is a threat to the foundation of our society's strong families.

Currently, many people obtain restraining orders to help protect themselves from their abusers. However, the current legislation and practices in the justice system create limitations that make restraining orders less effective than they ought to be. Victims of domestic violence or those at risk of violence shouldn't have to wait for the courts to open before they can obtain a restraining order in an emergency. They shouldn't have to find out that they're not eligible for a restraining order because of the kind of relationship they're in. And they shouldn't have to question whether the restraining order will be enforced and charges laid appropriately if the order is violated.

Finally, offenders shouldn't be able to go on knowing that there are no serious consequences for violating a restraining order. Unfortunately, this is what is happening now. Police, family law lawyers and other people who are representing victims of domestic violence have told us that victims need to get restraining orders more quickly. They've told us that the current eligibility criteria are too limited. For example, people who have been living together for less than three years can't get a restraining order unless they are also the parents of a child. There have been urgent calls for changes to ensure better enforcement of restraining orders.

Currently, enforcement of violations of restraining orders falls under the Provincial Offences Act. This means that alleged abusers can only be held for 24 hours after violating an order, unless there is a concern that either he or she would not appear in court. While this

may be fine for a minor offence, it's not acceptable for the serious crime of domestic violence.

Bill 117 addresses these limitations and proposes to correct them to better protect victims of domestic violence and their children. Throughout the debate on this bill, the opposition has attempted to minimize the importance of this proposed law and our other achievements of making innovative changes in the justice system.

This government does not apologize for its law-and-order agenda. We make no apology for being on the side of victims. We make no apologies for holding abusers accountable. We make no apologies for our commitment to triple the number of domestic violence courts across Ontario to 24; for allocating an additional \$8 million annually to ensure the crown attorneys have sufficient time to meet with victims in preparing their cases for prosecution; for specializing training on domestic violence for crown attorneys across Ontario.

Improvements to the justice system are critical in helping victims of domestic violence, because it holds all abusers accountable for their actions. This is one way of breaking the cycle of violence. When the police enforce and when crown attorneys prosecute domestic violence cases, the message that domestic violence is a crime rings loud and clear. Work in the justice system keeps the public and abusers focused on the message that domestic violence will not be tolerated in Ontario.

The Domestic Violence Protection Act addresses the limitations of existing restraining orders to better protect victims of domestic violence. With this bill, more victims would have faster access to intervention orders, which would be better enforced across the province. Experience with similar legislation in other provinces supports the need for Bill 117 in Ontario.

For example, Saskatchewan's legislation over the last five years has provided quick access to orders and has enabled more victims to stay in their own homes. At the same time, the bill is a balanced bill, and while protecting victims of domestic violence it would also provide safeguards to protect those bound by intervention orders.

We on this side urge speedy passage of Bill 117 in the public's best interests.

1630

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I find it very interesting that here we are debating time allocation, in other words, closure of debate on a bill, and yet somehow the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey blames the opposition for the denial of this bill. That's not true. The Liberal caucus will support any bill which will reduce domestic violence, no matter how small or incremental a step that bill takes.

Just a moment on process: I've sat in these committees for a year and a half now. Quite often in these bills, whatever they are, although we support the principles, there are parts of the bills that are so ridiculous we can't support them, and we find ways, whether it's the NDP or the Liberals, to oppose those bills. That's our job. These

aren't stunts. That's democracy. It does hurt sometimes over there, but that's democracy.

I just want to make it clear that the Liberal caucus supports this bill. We just don't feel it goes far enough. The reason it doesn't go far enough is the majority of women who are affected by domestic violence will not ever enter these courts or go to the police. The majority of women don't feel safe to even leave their abusers until it's far too late for themselves or for their children, because there's nowhere for them to go.

You've washed your hands of social housing as of 1995 and you're proud of that. "Thank God," is what I heard one of the members yesterday say when that was pointed out to them: "Thank God we washed our hands of social housing." You've cut front-line shelter funding so that their waiting lists are longer and longer, particularly in southern Ontario, so these women have nowhere to go. They stay, they get abused, their children get sicker and sicker psychologically; then, when it's too late, you're going to get tough on the abuser. When they've already either been scarred for life or killed, or their children scarred for life, you're going to get tough with the abuser. It's too late then; it's way too late.

Ten days ago I was in Sarnia and I visited the interval home in Sarnia. Here are some statistics the papers didn't print, because quite often families of suicidal and successful suicides do not send press releases: two women committed suicide in Sarnia. They didn't even make it to the shelter. That is how helpless they felt. They knew they could only stay in the shelter in Sarnia for one month to six weeks. There is no second-stage housing in Sarnia and there are no social housing units available in Sarnia, so they stayed home. But the abuse got to them and they committed suicide.

What really brought me to tears and made me feel ashamed to be part of this Legislative Assembly, at least for that one day, was the story of a 10-year-old boy who observed his mother's abuse day in and day out and said, announced, proclaimed, "I'm not going to take this any more, Mom and Dad," and went upstairs and hanged himself—10 years old. How is this domestic violence bill going to help that child? Who is going to pay for that sin, for that murder, for that death?

The interval home in Sarnia can take only up to 17 people; that's including the children. They confess that at times they take 26 or 27. They don't want to turn anyone away. There are no second-stage houses; there are no social housing units. They know that by sending them away they're sending them back to a dangerous situation, and they often take more than they're allowed to take.

Because of the cutbacks, one of their staff members had to be laid off. Their utilities have increased in cost and yet their operating grants have decreased. I spent quite a bit of time with my colleague from Sarnia, Caroline Di Cocco, with the director of the interval home, and these women who work in this shelter do an amazing job of fundraising. But they need stable funding so they can make their clients feel secure.

I also visited the assault centre in Sarnia. What program was cut there? The program that was cut was the immigration settlement program where there was a counsellor who would counsel immigrant women who were abused. This counsellor spoke a number of languages. The funding for her was cut.

Ironically, six months before that program was cut \$30,000 worth of computer equipment was sent to the centre for use in this program. The former counsellor said to me, "That could have paid my wages for more than a year," because she was part-time.

I can get really cynical here and say, "These immigrant women aren't citizens yet, they don't vote, they don't have a voice. Cut their programs." But we should be a government for citizens and non-citizens, for taxpayers and non-taxpayers. That is what has made this province great in the past and what has made Canada great in this world. That is slipping.

Yesterday representatives from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses came again, and the leader of the third party asked a question based on the book that was published by this group. I want to read one paragraph from a child, Rachel, who is 10 years old:

"How I Feel About the Shelter

"I feel good to be in the shelter because it's a good place. When you get bored you get to do crafts. You make friends, and you get to explore a new place. They even have a toy rocket that goes up into the air by pumping water into it. I like the staff, too. They always give you a warm feeling, and that's why I like the shelter."

I have a daughter who is almost 10. There are some very basic things I read here that make this little girl happy. If you read between the lines—and you certainly don't have to be a psychologist to read between the lines—what this little girl is saying is, "I feel safe, and my mother feels safe."

This is where the cuts came. Yes, they put money into employment programs, and we applaud that. But before a woman can take advantage of an employment program or a career change, she has to feel safe. Maslow's hierarchy of needs says that safety is number one, food is number two. Self-actualization comes much later.

Another poem by an abused woman:

The worst fear of all,
Is the fear of being alone.
The hardest step for one to take,
Is the first step to be on your own.

The first sign of strength,
Is to stand up to your fears.
The first sign of inner peace,
Is when you can shed the tears.

The first step to a solution,
Is taking the time to think things through.
The first step to happiness,
Is accepting what is inside of you.

The first sign of independence,
Is standing on your own.
The first sign of love
Is knowing you're not alone.

When you speak to these women, that is how they feel: very alone, very forgotten.

Earlier in the House I also talked about the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. When the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario came, they said to me that the minister was unable to give them assurances that it was not Ontario that was holding Canada back from signing on to the optional part of this protocol. What is the optional part? It allows a woman to go to the convention when that woman has exhausted all the other means in that province or country. Most of the other countries have signed on to this except Canada, and according to the Council of Women of Ontario, it is because Ontario is in the way.

All I know is what the council of women told me. I made a member's statement asking the minister to come clear and straight on this issue, preferably in writing: is it Ontario that's holding us back as a country or not?

Lest the members opposite put in a box or category the type of women who are abused and need our assistance, let me refer very briefly to a letter to the Premier by a very educated woman who was abused, a social worker.

"I am on workfare. I have two young children who are my priority, as it should be, and a family that is truly supportive.

"My ex-husband and I bought a small house in 1993...."

To make a long story short, she took on all the loans after the divorce.

"I have struggled ever since to ensure my children have a healthy and stable home.... I receive no financial help from their father."

Previously a member of the NDP pointed out that the Family Responsibility Office isn't working with deadbeat dads. That's all tied into this. Many of the same clients we see from shelters in our constituency offices also have difficulties with the FRO, of course. If a partner is going to go as far as beating and abusing, not paying child support or wife support is not a priority.

The woman continues: "I completed a social service worker course in 1996. I've always had a part-time job, but it is never enough to pay all the bills, so I am grateful for the government's help.

"I receive \$1,086 per month."

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She goes on to list her very modest expenses. Some of these grocery expenses—most middle-class families spend in a weekend having two or three meals out with their kids what this woman spends in a month. She is left with \$266 every month.

"None of my debts were due to a frivolous lifestyle....

"The final straw is that your government has just put a hefty lien on a house that I barely own."

Our caucus has brought this up. The member from Leeds has brought up before how there is absolutely no compassion across the way when a person is attempting to own a home but is still accepting help from the government. Some of these homes are actually cheaper and the mortgages these women are paying are actually less than if they were on social assistance and paying rent, and they have the dignity of a home.

I can't believe what this women says.

"My children love their home, their friends, this town and so do I. I have always taken pride in my abilities as a mother, counsellor, bookkeeper and homeowner.

"All I want is a good job that will pay enough to cover my expenses, including child care, and allow me to pay back my debts. I need something where I am not away from my kids all weekend or all evening. Good jobs are hard to find and now even harder because I no longer have a car.

"Should I give up, declare bankruptcy, live on the street? I might have no choice."

This is a woman who was abused, who actually broke away from that and tried to have a successful life. Once again, because of the roots of abuse, the power taken away, women are suffering.

I'm sharing my time. There's so much more to be said, but we are debating time allocation, which means once again we are cutting debate on this very important issue.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I will be joined from my caucus by Marilyn Churley, the member from Riverdale.

I listened, oh so carefully, to what the parliamentary assistant had to say in his opening comments to this time allocation motion, which is designed not just to inhibit debate but to prohibit debate, to end it, to ensure there isn't a thorough consideration of all the concerns that had increasingly come to the forefront as we progressed through this bill in committee.

Yes, New Democrats thought the bill held some great promise and supported the bill on first reading. Yes, we supported the bill on second reading. We were anxious for the bill to get to committee. But then we heard the modest two days of presentations, and some of the flaws in the bill became incredibly apparent.

Opposition members from both opposition caucuses—understand that we're in the minority on that committee. It's clear. I understand the government members control what happens in committees. But opposition members began to address those flaws, beginning, quite frankly, with the first section of the bill and relied upon and referred to arguments made to the committee by presenters, and relied upon and argued positions taken by any number of people who wanted to be at the committee to testify viva voce but who were forced to make their submissions in writing.

The opposition members were voted down summarily from minute one as they raised serious concerns, legitimate concerns about elements of this bill that would leave it far behind what this government is trying to pretend it is. Opposition members were, in a spirit of

non-partisanship, trying to make the bill the thing that folks out there were hoping it could be for them. In comment after comment we saw the gestures from the whip of the committee indicating, "Ignore those observations by opposition members, ignore their references to comments made by witnesses at the committee," to people who took the time and who cared enough to make a valuable contribution to that committee.

You've got to understand that to most of the people across this province, that committee process is their one entree into the legislation-building process. Although I have grown, over the course of a dozen years-plus, very cynical about it, for folks out there it's their one chance to make a difference. They do it at great expense to themselves, with the expenditure of a great deal of energy, and with great commitment and sincerity. I've seen far too many now leave those committee hearings shaking their heads and saying, "Why did I bother? What was the point of travelling here?" from whatever part of the province they travelled here from. What was the point of engaging in the incredible amount of work that many of these participants do in preparation of their submissions when it was all for naught, when it meant diddly-squat to government members who were going to vote as they were whipped, regardless of what submissions were being made by participants from the public across this province in those committees?

As we went through section 1 and section 2, as I say, opposition members tried—and I'm sorry we failed—to be as creative as we could be in trying to impress upon government members that perhaps there was reason for some pause and some reflection on the arguments that were being made, that there were some serious concerns about the language of the bill, about the fact that the bill, once it's passed, will be just another statute on the shelves of this government's impotent arsenal against abusers of women and kids.

Four years later, the Family Responsibility Office, the family support plan, remains one of the biggest sources of complaints to our constituency offices; I dare to say all 103 constituency offices across this province. Four years and they still haven't got it right. Women and kids are still suffering, and this government wants to blow its horn, wants to blast its trumpet about all the great things it's doing for victims? My foot.

The Victims' Bill of Rights is declared effectively of no effect by the courts in this province. The Premier promises to replace it with a meaningful bill of rights, and we see nothing.

I mentioned earlier the sex offender registry. You remember the fanfare, the photo ops and, my God, the press conferences by the Attorney General. That legislation passed. Where's the sex offender registry? Not a whisper of it. I recall the committee process for that bill too, because opposition members, in that case New Democrats along with the official opposition, made amendments to that bill to make it tougher, to ensure that a wider range of sex offenders would be included in that registry. We were concerned that the government was

leaving holes big enough for a Mack truck to drive through in terms of the sex offenders who wouldn't be registered. Were those amendments acceptable to the government? Those weren't either.

And yes, the committee process, as we were doing clause-by-clause, began to become increasingly frustrating and of increasing concern, I suspect, to all opposition members; certainly to me. When we reached the section of this bill, very early on, and observed and had an opposition amendment that would have cured the provision in this bill—this bill, as it stands, will permit abusive spouses, partners, husbands, people who are beating the daylight out of their spouses, girlfriends, partners, to keep arsenals of weapons. The bill specifically prohibits a judge, when making a so-called intervention order, from ordering that an incredibly violent respondent be compelled, among other things, in the discretion of the judge, to surrender whatever collection of handguns, long-arm firearms, what have you, he may have in his possession. That's nuts. This Legislature has been told far too often of, and has had to reflect far too many times on, the list of women who are fatal victims of lethal violence by partners in this province. You go through that list and you find that the weapon of choice, when it comes to assassinating one's girlfriend, one's wife, one's spouse, is a gun.

1650

The official opposition had an amendment. Was the amendment perfect? I suppose not. Did it address the issue? Yes, it did. It was frustrating to see the amendment not even worthy of consideration by the government. Their obsession with letting even some of the most violent people in our society, in our provincial community, retain possession of firearms went beyond frustrating to repugnant.

It was then put to the committee, "Well, look. Let's go beyond sections 3 and 4," the two sections you're talking about. "If you don't like the official opposition amendment, let's defer consideration of sections 3 and 4, the ones that will permit abusers to continue to pack their firearms, and deal with the rest of the sections of the bill. That way you'll have time, government, you'll have time, Parliamentary Assistant—your bureaucrats, your policy advisers will have time—to draft the amendment you think is appropriate if you don't like the official opposition amendment." That was as conciliatory and non-partisan a gesture as could ever be made. But was that good enough for the government? No, because their wacko obsession with the right to bear arms overrode common sense.

I don't find it amusing to have violent men whose spouses, whose girlfriends, whose partners, whose ex-partners have been getting beaten, have had the boots put to them, have had clubs and whatever other weaponry put to them, but unless and until he chooses to point a gun at her—you see, the problem is that by the time he's pointing the gun at her, he's probably going to kill her. So women are mowed down in this province.

I don't find it comforting at all that this government that wants to wield its majority with oh, so much authority refuses—refuses—to consider the dangerousness, the incredible hazard, of letting violent men, even after assaulting the women in their lives, keep conceivably an arsenal—not one rifle, not two rifles, but handguns, rifles, modified M-16s, the whole nine yards. Does it sound overly dramatic? Think about the women who had to look down the barrel of a gun in their final moments before they got blasted away. That's dramatic.

Notwithstanding our enthusiasm and support for this bill on first reading when it was announced in the House and on second reading in our eagerness to get it to committee, this caucus is seriously reconsidering whether it should even be supporting Bill 117 on third reading and whether it wants to be a party to the false sense of security that this government is creating. This government is pretending, and it's nothing but pretense, that this bill is somehow going to protect women who are at risk. I tell you, that's a very dangerous state of a false sense of security.

I too was incredibly moved by having a chance to read excerpts and pieces from the collection of the book *No More! Women Speak Out Against Violence*, published by OAITH, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. It was inevitable that I find stuff written in there that is oh, so relevant to what we're talking about today, because, you see, even these women know that more phony legislation isn't going to protect women from violence and slaughter.

One author, Catherine, who is the director of a shelter, writes, "We have a strong voice in this fight against violence against women but the government is not hearing our voices. We do not pretend to have all the answers, but we know we should be allowed to play a bigger role in the development of systems that would go a long way in providing women the safety that they so desperately need."

Another, Jeanette, who is a front-line shelter counsellor, writes that it's a lot harder—and understand the impact of this—for abused women in this province to leave their violent spouses now in Mike Harris's Ontario, since the Harris government came to power.

"The legal process has become more difficult," more complex. "There is now a manual to explain the intricacies of the family law rules.... A woman has to have a lawyer to guide her through the maze of paperwork."

One of the issues that was recurrent during our discussion of Bill 117 in committee was, where are the lawyers going to come from who are going to assist women in the course of their applications, be they the *ex parte* emergency applications or the section 4 ones? Where are the lawyers going to come from when this government refuses to provide legal aid with the funds it needs to ensure that women can access those legal services?

There was the proposition that somehow women would be able to use the police. The police? "Once is

Too Often," by a woman, Lori: "No one at the police station would help me compile the statements and the evidence. I was told it was my responsibility because I laid the private information charge, not them," the police. "I knew I was slipping through the cracks of the system and I knew if the police didn't assist me, the system would fail me." Systems, resources.

Julia, in "On the Road to Freedom," writes about having grown up in a controlling family, writes about having her parents abuse her in a variety of ways, writes about her father dying when she was 19 and how she was left alone to fend for herself, writes about how shortly after, she got pregnant, in hindsight "probably to fill a void that my Dad left behind." Then she writes with some upbeat tone, "It has been two months since I left my one-year stay at the Second Stage. I am comfortable with my life now and happy to be me. I have gained my freedom both physically and mentally. I don't need to depend on anyone else to make my life complete."

The editors of the book, Ms Morrow and Ms Wakeling, add an addendum to that article. They draw our attention to the reality in Mike Harris's Ontario. "Second-stage housing programs," which Julia was able to access and which changed her life so radically, "are independent living programs where women can stay for up to a year." However, my friends, "In 1995, funding for second-stage housing counselling programs then delivered by the province of Ontario was cut by 100%." So there is no more funding for second-stage housing.

1700

That's why when members of this caucus talk to this government, they try to impress on them so often that this government's cuts to social assistance have forced so many women to maintain their home in the home of abusive, violent, potentially deadly partners. If they do manage to leave that violent home where their lives and the lives of their children are at risk, they are forced back because of the cuts to social assistance, which mean that rental accommodations aren't available to them. The cuts to any number of programs and shelters across this province mean that shelters have longer and longer waiting lists and struggle with lower and lower budgets at higher and higher demand.

So I make no apologies, and I ask members of both opposition parties to deny that apology as well to this government, about having been less than co-operative in committee. I'll be damned if I'm going to sit by while this government passes phony legislation that it says is going to protect women but that is going to do nothing more than create a false sense of security and provide women who are victims of violence—some of whom will inevitably end up on that growing list of women assassinated by their partners and former partners and spouses and boyfriends. It's going to deny them real protection. It's going to force them to jump through yet more hoops and deal with yet more bureaucracies. It's going to create a house of cards that has no substance to it.

I am disgusted at this government's phony legislation in the course of Bill 117 and its even phonier closure

motion today. It's the height of dishonesty. It is. I don't think women out there are buying it. My constituents aren't buying it. Other people in this province aren't going to buy it. I'll be damned if I'm going to buy it. We will be opposing this time allocation motion and, as I say, we will be reconsidering whether we as New Democrats in good faith can support legislation that is nothing more than part of a publicity stunt by this government to create the impression that they are on the side of victims and women who are subjected to violence and women who will be subjected to violence, when this government has abandoned those women beginning in 1995 and carrying on now to the year 2000 so that the list of murdered women in Mike Harris's Ontario can grow longer and longer, and so that the victims—the kids, the mothers—can continue to suffer.

As I indicated, Ms Churley from Riverdale will be speaking to this matter as well. I look forward to the chance to vote against this evil, evil motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to speak to the time allocation of Bill 117. Of course, the reason it's time-allocated is because it was at a standstill and nothing was happening. In spite of the agreement that it would go forward and that there was support from other parties, here we are at a stalemate and it comes to this.

I make no apology for going ahead on the part of this government with a bill that we feel addresses some of the concerns of a very important constituent in most of our ridings. By that I mean that I think it's important. I'm not going to stand here and tell you it's perfect. The member for Niagara Centre had the opportunity to bring this bill forward, or something like it. He chose to lie on his back and kick his feet because he couldn't start government insurance. If he had felt as strongly about domestic abuse as he did about his own agenda of change back then, he could have kicked his feet about that, because they had the opportunity to do it and did nothing.

This government believes in addressing needs, and we have made remarkable progress in the number of initiatives we have brought forward to address some of the needs of families where there is either a dysfunction between the husband and wife, or perhaps it's an unaddressed outrage of temper. I don't want to ever be accused of saying it's always men, but in our society, by far, the man is the abuser in a majority of cases, and it's not just a small majority.

The Ministry of the Attorney General has put forward initiatives to help victims of domestic violence. We've created the most comprehensive domestic violence court program in the country. An additional \$10 million will be spent to further expand the program. The Ministry of the Attorney General also provides for emotional support and prepares victims as they deal with the criminal justice system. We expanded the victim/witness assistance program and we plan to do more.

The Ministry of the Attorney General has added 59 additional crown attorneys to interview and prepare victims and witnesses, and we have increased help for families in crisis by the expansion of the supervised access program.

I'm not going to stand here and tell you that I am content with the initiatives that have been taken up to this point. In my own community, in my own constituency, I am not content with the amount of access that is available, particularly for women and their families, to be supervised. It's a big need, and although I will stand here and say this government is firmly committed to doing as much as we can with the resources that are available to prevent any future abuse, in that initiative I want to do more and we will do more.

An additional \$500,000 was provided to cover and streamline applications for emergency legal aid advice, and the number of hours was doubled to assist abused women seeking restraining orders. As we see from this bill, restraining orders are not the only remedy that should be available to women in crisis. In most of these crises, the ones who need the help the most are those who have deteriorated to that extent and they are the ones in need of the most help.

Not only has the Attorney General addressed and is addressing some of the needs, the Ministry of Community and Social Services has allocated \$51 million in the budget year 2000 for emergency shelters and related services under the violence against women program. Some \$10 million in annualized funding has been allocated by the Ministry of Community and Social Services to help children who have witnessed domestic violence and to establish a transitional support program, and \$21 million has been allocated to more than 100 counselling programs for women and their children in the year 2000.

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The Ministry of the Solicitor General has also been involved in help for domestic violence. The Ministry of the Solicitor General has allocated \$10 million annually for expansion of services, including community-based programs such as the victims' crisis assistance and referral service and SupportLink, and to make services more flexible to meet the needs of northern communities.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has committed \$50 million in rent supplements to help house up to 10,000 families and individuals.

These are a few of the actions that demonstrate our government's commitment to help victims. We know there is more to be done. That is why we're proposing this help for this very real crisis in those families where the situation has become a crisis.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure for me to stand in the House this afternoon. Snow is blowing in most of my riding. It's a pleasure to be here and to speak on the progress of our government's initiative to better protect victims of domestic violence. If there's anything I can do to speed up and to support this very real and important initiative, I stand here today making that commitment.

Mr Bryant: We're still reeling over here on this side of the House at the comments made by the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey that he felt robbed of the ability to speak on this debate as much as he wanted to. I'm not allowed to call any member of this House a hypocrite, of course, but I will say that when it comes to time allocation motions, he certainly is hypocritical, if you understand my oxymoronic suggestion here. My point here—

Hon Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure that the parsing that is being attempted by the honourable member crosses the line and I would ask you to ask the member to withdraw his comments.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the member knows that certain language is unparliamentary and I'm sure he knows that you cannot do indirectly what you cannot do directly. So I would ask him to withdraw.

Mr Bryant: Withdrawn, Speaker.

The real issue here is about getting this law right. Come on. The government introduced the bill, the official opposition supports the bill and the New Democratic Party supports the bill. So all three parties want this bill to happen. So it goes to committee and amendments are tabled to try and improve on what was there. Leaving aside the shortcomings of this government's approach to domestic violence altogether—we'll get to that in a moment—leaving that aside, we wanted to make this bill as effective as possible and so the Liberals tabled a number of amendments. At the beginning of that debate, incredibly, the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General said, "We will consider all amendments very seriously and closely." Of course thereafter they did not agree to a single amendment. The conniptions that the government was in to try and explain why they couldn't support the amendments would have been comic if not for the fact that it's victims of violence who are at stake here.

He singled out myself and the member for Niagara Centre as fighting for victims of domestic violence. We don't apologize for that. What we were hoping—I'll tell you, we wanted to get it right, and in particular we really wanted to get the Charlton Heston clause fixed. Again, it would be comic if it wasn't so tragic. Under the present clause in the government's bill, a judge cannot seize a weapon unless that person has already used the weapon or threatened to use the weapon. So if we have an abuser who has a history of violence—and we may have a number of instances either prosecuted or not under the criminal law because, as we've discussed in this House time and time again, the vast majority of victims of domestic violence don't turn to the criminal justice system. In fact, this bill does not involve going to the criminal justice system. That's the point of the bill. We heard that was the purpose of it. A victim of domestic violence could make an application under this bill. You don't have to go to the police. So you've got a circumstance where the victim has been victimized several times and it turns out that the abuser's got a gun.

You've got to be joking. How could this government be against the idea of taking the gun away from somebody who's got a history of abuse? We said, "No, that must be a mistake," to suggest that you have to use the gun before the bill can take it away. If they actually already used the weapon, then they would be charged criminally and inevitably, under one of the bail conditions, the gun would be taken away. So that's of no help. Or threaten to use the gun; again, that's also a crime. That provision doesn't do anything, so we said on this side of the House, "No, those who are domestic abusers cannot keep their weapons."

You wouldn't believe the arguments we heard on behalf of the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General on this front. The first shot out of his mouth was, "This isn't going to work in rural communities, and of course the members won't understand that." The member for Niagara Centre and Mrs McLeod, the member from Thunder Bay, don't understand anything about rural areas? I see, OK. But moreover, besides that, the idea that rural abusers somehow have some royal exemption from being prosecuted or otherwise being held accountable under the domestic violence protection bill was just a patently absurd argument.

The thinking by the opposition in the committee was that we had enormous respect for the witnesses who came forward and made their submissions and we hoped that more would talk to the government about the amendments tabled and other amendments. I have enormous respect for the counsel at the Ministry of the Attorney General, who are the best that Ontario can offer. I was hoping that the government would go away, and in fact those working in the ministry—not the Honourable Mr Flaherty and not the parliamentary assistant but those who work there as counsel—would go to the government and say, "You know what? I think we should fix this."

We tried to do everything in our power to give them that opportunity and give them time to do it. Somehow the government thought that it was OK to dig in their heels on behalf of the gun lobby on this one, and it's a disgrace.

Then they try and fix it, these Keystone Kops of Ontario law and order. They table their own amendment that was supposed to cover it, and they said, "Nothing in this act will affect section 111 of the Criminal Code." I should hope not; otherwise, it would be unconstitutional. Then the parliamentary assistant puts a closure motion on his own amendment. We couldn't even debate his amendment. He killed his own amendment. I haven't been here that long; I've never seen anything like it. So not only are they against our amendments, they're against their own amendments, they hate debate so much.

Then we heard yet again from the Deputy Premier and during question period from the minister, "The member for St Paul's knows or ought to know that section 111 covers this." I guess he assumes that none of us can read, so let me read to the House section 111 of the Criminal Code.

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: Fair enough. But, here, I'll show you that I can read. Section 111 of the Criminal Code reads, "A peace officer, firearms officer or chief firearms officer may apply to a provincial court judge for an order prohibiting a person from possessing any firearm," and it includes a number of weapons.

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Here's the first problem: an applicant under the domestic violence bill ain't a peace officer, a police officer or a firearms officer. The whole point here was that the victim could be the applicant, not a police officer. So right away, section 111 doesn't apply. The minister knows it and the parliamentary assistant knows it. Then it says you can apply before a provincial court judge, and he knows that too. The chart set out by the ministry staff shows how you get one of these emergency interim orders. It says you go to a JP. Go to a JP? You can't go to a JP to get a section 111 order under the Criminal Code, and the minister knows it and the parliamentary assistant knows that as well. Section 111 can't be used. As if a JP or a provincial court judge would make an order under section 111 of the Criminal Code wondering what's going to happen with respect to the emergency interim order application under the domestic violence protection bill, plus there would have to be a separate application.

The whole point was one-stop shopping, as it were, for victims of domestic violence in going to the courts and getting some kind of interim order. It was a false argument. It was a phony argument. It was a sham.

We had an opportunity to fix it—all of us support this bill—yet no, no, they wanted to shut it down. We wanted to take the time to get it right because we think that this bill, as little as it may do in the broad scheme of things as per Madam Justice Baldwin in the Baldwin committee report submitted to this government in August of last year to conform to those recommendations, we wanted at least to get it right.

We heard from witnesses, including the Advocates' Society, the Canadian Bar Association and the Family Lawyers' Association that said, "You know what? If you don't fix this bill, what's going to happen is that the victims are going to have to fight the constitutional challenges from the abusers and their defence lawyers." We always have concerns about constitutional challenges. We can't let it stop every single piece of legislation.

In this case, guess who's going to have to pay for it? It is going to be like the victims under the Parental Responsibility Act. They're going to have to bear the brunt of the errors of this legislation. They're going to have to bear the brunt of any shortcomings. I have no doubt that counsel for the Attorney General did their best to get it right under the time constraints provided. All we were saying was, why don't we make sure we get it right so that victims don't have to pay for it?

Lastly, since the parliamentary assistant decided to familiarize himself with the Baldwin committee report, he started out the last round of debate on this bill in the

committee by saying, "Seventy per cent of the Baldwin committee report"—in terms of what had to be done in the first year—"has or will be done." Will be done? What happened to the other 30%? The government's going to abandon 30% of the Baldwin committee report's recommendations?

This isn't good enough. These amendments should've gone through. I don't know why they want to put the gag order on this any further. I hope it's not because they know very well that this bill is flawed and they want to get this over with. We support the bill. Obviously we can't support this closure motion.

Ms Churley: Since Wife Assault Prevention Month and the December 6 remembrances in 1999, 16 women were murdered by their partners or ex-partners, and four children, in this province. We know that on average about 40 women a year in Ontario are murdered by their partners or ex-partners. We have a bill before us today that, from the outset, we were prepared to support.

The member for Niagara Centre, who is our justice critic, sat on the committee that looked at this bill. The member for Niagara Centre brought to our attention that there were some serious flaws in this bill. The major serious flaw that the member for Niagara Centre has been talking about repeatedly—he has been much maligned by members of the government. He has been accused, as has our caucus, of not being supportive of a bill that would help women who are in a situation of domestic violence. That is despicable. I think everybody in this Legislature knows that our support for programs for women who are in potentially violent situations is an issue that we bring up repeatedly in this Legislature and we repeatedly ask the government to bring in and bring back programs they have taken away from these very victims.

The member for Niagara Centre has pointed out that there is a clause in this bill that desperately needs to be amended. I want you to picture yourself, I want you—the members of the government—to imagine that you are a woman living with a partner who is bigger than you, stronger than you and has complete power over you and threatens you, say, with a knife; who is bigger and stronger and can completely overpower you physically and threatens you with a knife, perhaps slashes you with that knife.

In a closet in the next room is a gun, or perhaps an arsenal of guns. Imagine yourself in that situation when you are under that kind of threat, and because the abuser does not directly threaten you with that gun or use that gun on you, the gun will not immediately be taken away. The knife will be taken away, but the gun or guns will still be there.

Can you put yourself in that position of living with an abuser and knowing that in the next room, or perhaps the very room you're in, is a gun, and that gun can stay there after you have been directly threatened and abused? Can you imagine the constant fear you would feel, knowing that gun is there?

If it were me in that situation I would want that gun removed from my house immediately. I wouldn't want to

rely on the Criminal Code that requires notice and for a date to be set for a hearing and all of that. I would want to know categorically that that gun would be immediately removed.

This is a very serious issue that we're talking about here today. I was pleased to see the government come forward with such a bill and I am very disappointed that the members refuse to make an amendment that would correct that situation.

Valerie Lucas, 23, mother of three children, from Oshawa was shot point blank three times in a parking lot where she had gone to provide child access to her ex-partner.

Mila Luft, 27, and her four children, Daniel, 7, Nicole, 5, Peter, 3, and David, three months, from Kitchener; Mila was stabbed to death and her four children were then shot to death.

Donna Pritloff, 46, from Keswick was shot to death at her home.

These are just some of the very real women, and children in this case, who were shot to death by an abusive partner or ex-partner. I'm reading these names because we have to somehow get beyond thinking about this as just an issue that we're discussing here in Parliament among ourselves in a civilized way. We are talking about women being murdered here.

1730

What does it take to get the government members to understand that this bill needs to be amended? There are other problems with the bill as well, but this is the main issue that we want corrected. The government had an opportunity to do that and refused to do so. I've heard it said time and time again that the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey thought it would be grossly unfair to farmers to have to surrender their guns. As far as I know he hasn't denied saying that. I would say in my situation, if it were me—and I again want members to imagine it being them in that situation—I wouldn't care if it were a farmer or anybody else. I would want those guns immediately—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Or a lawyer—good point—removed from the premises so at least I would go to sleep at night knowing that I wouldn't be shot to death.

That's what this is all about. These names are real. These women were real. They lived, they had children, they had a future, they had dreams, they had hopes and they're now dead, shot to death. Many of these other women were strangled or knifed to death, slashed. All kinds of horrible things happened to them. Children have been abused. Children have witnessed those acts. It is unspeakable that this is still happening in our society.

We know that the government is focusing specifically on law-and-order issues around domestic violence. We support those initiatives. They are important, but we tell you time and time again that only about 25% of women who are experiencing violence in the home go through the criminal justice system. That's 75% of these women who don't go through that system, and that is why we

urge the government repeatedly to bring back the community supports that used to be there to help these women escape those situations.

Second-stage housing: one of the first things this government did was cut second-stage housing. I remember when it happened. I was the women's issues critic for the NDP at the time and I toured some second-stage housing that was still at the time functioning. They have now closed down some of them. This government stopped funding second-stage housing. Second-stage housing is the next stage beyond a shelter and, let me tell you, the shelters are overflowing. We need more funding for shelters but we desperately need, these women and their children desperately need, what we call second-stage support. They need housing. Often the children have witnessed the abuse or may have been abused themselves and they need counselling. They need special services, and the success rate is well documented.

That is one thing we've been repeatedly asking this government to reinstate, and I believe deep down that they know that was a mistake. I wish the minister or the Premier would stand up tomorrow and say they're going to do that, and that they're going to bring back real rent control. One of the problems that has been documented now is that since this government got out of housing completely, they are not building affordable housing any more, and because rent control has been virtually destroyed, women are having a harder and harder time, particularly in areas like Toronto and other urban centres. They're having a very hard time if not an impossible time finding a place to live. We are hearing more and more that women are either not leaving because they can't find a place to live or they leave and find that they can't survive on their own because of the welfare cuts and, because rents are so high, they end up going back, in desperation, to their abuser.

This is not acceptable. It really isn't acceptable. We are in boom times in Ontario. We had the finance minister get up yesterday. We've had tax cut after tax cut and we had the finance minister get up and talk about how the economy is booming, but I want to remind the government of the people who have been left behind.

You know, I don't think there is any argument through all segments of our society, no matter what their political beliefs are—I don't think there's anybody who does not support programs for victims of what we call domestic violence. I call it male abuse because the majority is male abuse. I don't think there is anybody in Ontario who would object to this government's reinvesting in these programs once again to help women and their children who are in these situations. We desperately need these programs, and I would urge the government not to just rely on the rhetoric that we hear time and time again. When I asked the Premier a question in the House about it yesterday, he talked about getting people back to work, making them more independent. He said throwing more money at it isn't the answer. I'm saying this is not about throwing money at it; this is giving money so that important community supports and programs can be put

back in place to help these women and their children escape from unbelievable hell that most people in this Legislature couldn't even begin to imagine. I think it's time that we all began to imagine.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I have to say how disappointed I am again to have to speak to yet another—one of the many closure motions that have been brought by this government. It really did strike me as strange when we got the sermon from the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, who felt somewhat wronged that his time was taken away from him. I would only suggest that maybe now he knows how we feel when closure motions are imposed on us, when we're not provided with the opportunity to make our points as we would like and should have the opportunity to do.

I would like to make some comments with respect to the member for Perth-Middlesex, who said that the closure motion came to the floor because nothing was happening. I would say that nothing was happening because the government did nothing. This bill went to committee. There were five amendments presented at the committee and the members of the government did nothing with those amendments. They died at committee. So when I hear members of the government say that nothing was happening, whose fault is that? Certainly we, as the opposition, did what we thought was our responsibility, to focus on those parts of the bill that could be strengthened, that should be changed, that should be corrected, and nothing happened. Your government chose not to pay attention to those very worthy amendments that were brought for debate. So I say to the members opposite who would say, "Nothing was happening so we have to bring closure," nothing has happened because you have done nothing in a responsible fashion to address some of the very worthy issues that came to the committee table for discussion.

The member for Perth-Middlesex also made reference to the fact that, "Well, this government is doing what it can with the resources it has." It may not be enough—and he even recognized in his own riding it wasn't all that he thought it should be, or indeed what the people needed—but, "This government is doing what it can with the resources that it has." That statement really strikes me as strange today, the day following a statement by the Minister of Finance where he boasted about the \$1.4-billion surplus revenues that the government will have. Yet not one of those dollars will be directed toward resources that will save the lives of abused partners. That is very sad to me. So when a member would say, "You know, we're doing what we can with the dollars we have," I say, no, you're not.

I have proof in my own riding where resources are not well-managed. In this particular case in my riding there's a woman who—the example is this: she's in a violent situation. She has been advised by the Ontario Provincial Police not to stay alone at night in her residence. That's how serious it is. She has found accommodation to spend

nights in a safe place. As it turns out, that location is outside the county boundary, so Ontario Works has said to her that because she does not sleep in the county at night, she is going to be cut off. That's how this government is supporting victims of violence in my riding. That's a fact my office is trying to deal with, trying to help this woman. The community and social services would say that because she is not sleeping at her place of residence—she is able to return there and feels reasonably safe through the day, but because she is not able to spend the night there and the location she has found to be safe and manageable is not in her county jurisdiction, her support from this government is being pulled away.

There's a great deal more I could say. I look forward to opportunities over the next few days. I'm sure we'll pay tribute and remember women who have fallen victims to violence. Over the course of this week I know I will have an opportunity to further address concerns in my riding in terms of how this government is not protecting victims of violence.

This caucus has decided we will support the bill, because it's a small step. We have offered some significant ways the government could protect victims of violence. They have chosen to ignore them. That is regrettable. I certainly cannot support the time allocation motion. Thank you for this time this afternoon.

1740

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier) : J'aimerais encore une fois donner mes commentaires sur le projet de loi 117 et dire ma grande déception de voir que ce soir c'est la dernière chance qu'on a, la dernière occasion de parler du dossier sur la violence domestique.

Le procureur général propose encore une fois d'ajouter des mesures punitives pour faire en sorte que les abuseurs soient punis de façon beaucoup plus sévère. Bien sûr, Dalton McGuinty et le caucus libéral appuient ce projet de loi car nous croyons qu'il est nécessaire que les abuseurs soient punis. Mais ce que le gouvernement propose ne va pas assez loin. Il faut essayer de légiférer de façon positive pour prévenir la violence domestique au lieu de simplement punir les abuseurs après le fait.

It is important to understand that the entire Liberal caucus of course is in favour of stricter punishment for abusers, but we on this side of the House also know that punishment after the fact does nothing to prevent the abuse from happening in the first place. I am sure the Harris government would be very proud to say that Ontario is a province that punishes abusers the most, but even if this were true, it would still not mean that Ontario is the province with the least cases of abuse. This government unfortunately, and I'm not saying this in a partisan manner, is constantly reacting to problems rather than seeking to prevent them.

If the government were truly, and I mean truly, concerned about victims, it would strive to ensure that Ontario's women do not become victims in the first place. Rather than focusing solely on harsher punishment, why not restore the money it has already cut from women's shelters? Why not expand helpline

services so that women, not just in cities but throughout the province, may have access to counselling? Sure, the Harris government tripled the number of domestic violence courts, a measure I applaud, but unless women have the community supports they need to leave their abusers, the abusive men will never reach the courts in the first place.

There is very little vision and very little logic to this government's approach to domestic violence.

Nous entendons plusieurs experts parler de la stratégie du gouvernement face à la violence domestique. L'association ontarienne des maisons de passage sont de l'opinion que depuis que le gouvernement Harris est au pouvoir, nous avons vu une transition claire de l'attention du gouvernement allant de la prévention vers la punition.

« Bien sûr, » dit l'Association, « les services policiers doivent être inclus dans le processus », mais il faut se demander à quel point nous devons nous fier entièrement à eux, les policiers, lorsqu'il est reconnu que la grande majorité des femmes abusées—et je dis plus de deux tiers—ne font même pas appel aux policiers. Une des raisons, c'est qu'elles sont en position de dépendance économique face à leurs abuseurs. Elles n'ont nulle part pour se réfugier et ce, en grande partie, dû au fait que le gouvernement Harris a coupé dans les subventions aux maisons de transition en Ontario.

I know that it is sometimes difficult for us, but I am honestly convinced that this government has work to do in the area of domestic abuse.

Il y a vraiment des victimes qui ont besoin d'aide et qui n'ont personne vers qui se tourner; elles sont vulnérables. J'aimerais pouvoir leur dire, à ces victimes, que le gouvernement de l'Ontario sera là pour elles. J'aimerais pouvoir dire à ces victimes que le gouvernement de l'Ontario s'assurera qu'elles ne seront pas laissées en arrière à souffrir seules. J'aimerais pouvoir dire à ces victimes que le gouvernement de l'Ontario éliminera l'ombre de la peur à laquelle ces femmes abusées sont assujetties tous les jours. J'aimerais pouvoir leur dire que le gouvernement de l'Ontario y mettra le financement nécessaire pour essayer d'enrayer la violence mais je ne suis pas certaine de pouvoir l'affirmer. Je me demande si je dirais vraiment la vérité.

The opportunity is there. Ontario is currently enjoying one of the largest economic expansions in its history. If Mr Eves's budget surplus predictions are accurate and we are currently sitting on a \$1.4-billion surplus, then what better opportunity to send a message to victims of domestic violence that indeed this government wants to protect them from domestic violence.

Au lieu de parler uniquement aux groupes policiers pour trouver des moyens de punir davantage les abuseurs, nous devons encourager la participation des groupes intéressés au dossier de la violence domestique pour

qu'ils puissent partager leurs idées et leurs inquiétudes. C'est seulement lorsque nous aurons écouté les gens qui sont affectés par le problème social qu'est la violence domestique que nous pourrons commencer à l'éliminer.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for debate is complete.

Mr Klees has moved government notice of motion number 79. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Harris, Michael D.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Snobelen, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Spina, Joseph
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Sterling, Norman W.
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Stewart, R. Gary
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Stockwell, Chris
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Tilson, David
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tumbull, David
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Witmer, Elizabeth
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Young, David
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Conway, Sean G.	Kwinter, Monte
Bartolucci, Rick	Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario
Bountrogianni, Marie	Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony
Boyer, Claudette	Di Cocco, Caroline	McMeekin, Ted
Bradley, James J.	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Kormos, Peter	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 29.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1802.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
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Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac-	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Lennox and Addington	
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Brampton West-Mississauga /	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC)		Gerretsen, John (L)
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands /	
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston et les îles	
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	ministre du Tourisme		Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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	Minister of Transportation /		Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (F)
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Wellington-Grey			Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (F)
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Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)		Sampson, Rob (PC)
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	Minister of Labour /		
	ministre du Travail	London West / -Ouest	
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)	London-Fanshawe	
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Markham	
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	
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Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		

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Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
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		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 5 December 2000

Mardi 5 décembre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 décembre 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 4, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 147, An Act to revise the law related to employment standards / *Projet de loi 147, Loi portant révision du droit relatif aux normes d'emploi.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): The Minister of Labour.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Speaker, on a point of order: What the Minister of Labour has to say is extremely important to all the members in the House so I think there ought to be at least a quorum to listen to the words of this very honourable minister.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Labour.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I understand it's tough. It goes all the way to 12. He'd have to take his shoes off to get there, I'm sure.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order: I would ask the minister to withdraw those comments as being totally unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker: We'll leave that to the minister to decide.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I certainly withdraw. I didn't want to offend my good friend across the floor, nor his shoe selection.

I'm glad I get an opportunity for 57 minutes to talk about a much-maligned—

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Are you going the whole time?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Yes, I'm going the whole time, so settle back, get yourself a cup of java, maybe pop a little popcorn and maybe you'll learn something.

Anyway, it's a good opportunity to deal with a bill that has been much maligned, and there's a lot of misrepresentation taking place with respect this bill to the

people of the province outside of this place. I'm telling you, it's got to be a good opportunity to have a good debate on the bill. I'm not arguing that we need to debate the bill, but let's just debate the bill, rather than debating this interpretation that is clearly wrong that's perpetrated throughout Ontario.

The first thing we have to talk about, the first part that people have been peddling, is that somehow in this bill this government is legislating a 60-hour workweek. It's just not true.

Let's visit the old piece of legislation. The old Employment Standards Act said the maximum workweek in the province of Ontario will be 48 hours. If you want to work beyond 48 hours, you then must go to the Ministry of Labour and get a permit to allow any employee to work more than 48 hours. We produced 18,000 permits last year—18,000.

There are 24 sectors that aren't even covered under the Employment Standards Act: hospitality, trucking, hospitals, nuclear plants, manufacturing, mining. All kinds of things aren't even covered. So you know you've got hundreds of thousands of people who aren't even covered under the Employment Standards Act, and we're producing 18,000.

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We also have a study that says that only one third of the employers and employees out there who work more than 48 hours actually go and get a permit. So presume 18,000 are issued. That's one third of the total people who are actually out there contravening the law. They're not doing it knowingly or willingly, I'm certain. It's just that the law was archaic, arcane, antiquated and adopted in 1968. Everybody, to a person, be it a union or an employer or a non-union workplace, agreed that the Employment Standards Act was antiquated, outdated, contradictory and needed to be changed.

The starting point was we needed to deal with this issue with respect to the maximum workweek. We reviewed the permits that were issued, and what we saw was a clear indication that a number of these permit requests were being made to extend the hours in the workweek. That was it. It was it when the NDP were in party; they were approving permits just like that. It was it when the Liberals were in power; they were approving permits just like that. So it's passing strange to me how suddenly they've found this rationale to oppose this approach. It was that way under the NDP. The Ministry of Labour was producing permit after permit after permit

excluding sector after sector after sector from the 48-hour maximum workweek.

So what did we say? These are the specifics of the legislation we should all understand. We kept the 48-hour maximum workweek. We said, "No, that's it, a 48-hour maximum workweek." But when I took the white paper out in public hearings—which is another thing I find difficult to understand from the opposition members—to London, Windsor, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Toronto, hours and hours and hours, dozens and dozens and dozens of deputations, even unions were saying to me, "The system doesn't work. It's crazy. We wait up to six months for a permit. It's ineffective. It's ineffectual. It isn't timely." We had unions come in and say that.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: They said no, it wasn't effective. So we said let's maintain the 48-hour workweek and, rather than go through this archaic permit system to go beyond that, which everyone said was archaic, put in place a system where by written mutual consent the employer and the employee may agree to extend their workweek up to 60 hours. Once you get beyond 60 hours—it's a very small percentage of the permits requested—then you go to the permit system, thereby cutting the work, the red tape, the arcane system significantly, and we estimate somewhere between 80% and 90%. That was the situation. That's the thrust of this 60-hour debate. That's what it consists of. We just removed the permit system and provided an obligation on both parties to sign for a commitment.

The arguments opposite are that employers will coerce, intimidate etc. Look, there are two points that need to be made about that. If they're going to intimidate and coerce and break the law after this bill is passed, then why were they not intimidating and coercing and breaking the law before this bill was passed? You're breaking the same law. You're intimidating and coercing the same people. Your goal and end, your accomplishment, is exactly the same to each and every individual. There's no difference. If they're going to do that after this bill is adopted, what's the difference from when they did it before? If they're going to break the law, they're going to break the law.

What we said to the members opposite is rather than simply writing in meaningless words, we need to put some money and inspectors behind our decision. We committed to increasing the inspection staff by 20%; we're adding 20% more inspectors under this bill than we had. But more importantly, we're doing something that is much better. We're giving power to the inspectors, something these other administrations when they were in office refused to do. We're giving power to the inspectors. The inspectors, under this piece of legislation, if adopted, will be allowed to subpoena information from the company. So they can subpoena information on the spot. They can do spot audits, like your taxes. Everybody files their taxes and everybody files them fairly and evenly and objectively, not because everyone's going to

get audited but because a percentage of people are going to get audited.

Mr Agostino: Except the backbenchers.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Listen, I don't think we should be talking to this government about members who are in trouble with the law, that caucus across the way.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think so too, so I think you should hold your thoughts on that. So then we have—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You see, you don't even learn; you still go on.

Then we have a situation where it's like an audit of your taxes. Everyone files fairly, not because everyone gets audited but because some percentage get audited and you don't want to get audited. So we'll have an inspection process that allows for spot audits. Another good part of this bill is that we'll allow inspectors to take anonymous tips. That was one of the concerns offered up by the unions during the white paper. You said we didn't listen to the unions. Not true—we did. They said there's this concern about reprisal in the workplace. Nobody wanted to complain because to complain meant you had to put your name down, and if you put your name down there was reprisal. We're saying now you can complain anonymously. There's that protection. Then the inspector will go and inspect, and the employer says, "Who was it?"—"I'm not telling you." So those are the kinds of things we've put in place for the inspection process that other governments didn't.

Furthermore, we also gave the power of reinstatement. I've heard from across the floor on a number of occasions your concern with respect to reinstatement. The fact is that somebody could get fired, and if the employer appealed, they'd be out of work for six, seven, eight months until it got to the Ontario Labour Relations Board and then some time in the future they would be adjudicated upon. But they've lost all their money, all their income and all their standing. We're saying that upon inspection by the inspector, he can put that person right back into the job. If there's an appeal it goes to the Labour Relations Board, but in the meantime that person is working and getting paid. Wasn't that a big issue across the floor? Didn't you tell me that that was an issue, any reprisal? It's in the bill. You get reinstated. We listened to the unions. We listened to them and we heard what they said.

In fact, I've got to tell you directly that when I was in Sudbury I heard from a legal aid clinic worker who worked out of Muskoka—Huntsville—who said we needed the power to subpoena records. I said, "That's a good idea. That's going to form part of this bill." So don't tell me we didn't listen to them; we did, on a number of fronts. But as I said, the opposition members and some out there in the general public seem to want to just produce information that doesn't accurately reflect the bill. I'm willing to debate the bill, but let's debate the facts of the bill. Let's not debate this world that you're living in that doesn't reflect what's in the legislation.

Then we talk about modernizing the workplace, and that's what we're doing. The workplace has changed dramatically since 1968. We've got people who work at home, we've got different kinds of offices, we've got the high-tech community. The high-tech community said there should be no maximum workweek. They're saying, "No, people should be able to work as long as they want." We said we're not in favour of that, but I'll tell you this: seven out of 10 provinces in this country—no maximum workweek; seven out of 10 provinces—no maximum workweek.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): And Alabama.

Hon Mr Stockwell: They can work as long as they like. I hear the member for St Catharines chirping about the southern states. I'm not talking southern states; I'm talking Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Alberta, PEI. These aren't in the south; these are part of Canada: seven of 10, no maximum workweek. So that's really a misnomer, that's a red herring. They're trying to tell you out there that we're moving back to the—we have a maximum workweek; seven of the 10 provinces don't. We're on the leading edge of that stuff.

Mr Bradley: Will we have the Taft-Hartley bill next?
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Hon Mr Stockwell: I see that. I see the member for St Catharines, who I'm certain has spent a tremendous amount of time reading this bill.

Mr Bradley: I have.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I am sure you have.

Anyway, that's what we're doing to modernize the workplace.

Now we're talking about overtime and averaging of overtime. In the bill it talked about a three-week averaging period. We changed it to four weeks. Why? Because both unions and employers said, "If you're going to average overtime"—which you can do now; just get a permit from the Ministry of Labour, I say to the members opposite from Hamilton East and West. You approved many permits that allowed people to average their overtime. If you are so concerned about this part of the legislation, why did you do it? Why did you let them average their overtime by permit? If this was such a fundamental principal belief, why did you let them average overtime by permits? But they don't respond to these questions. They allowed people to average overtime.

What we're saying is that in a four-week period, if you want to create your own workweek at work—let me give you an example. Say you have two people and one of them is a firefighter. A lot of firefighters work four days on and four days off—a lot. So they've got busy weeks and not-so-busy weeks. The spouse says, "Look, I want to be busy the week you're at home so you can be at home with the kids and I want to be off the week you're at work so I can be home with the kids," and this happens all the time. So what happens? You can work X number of hours over the 44-hour workweek one week, and if you and your employer agree and it works out for you,

you can work significantly less. Now the employer is going to say, "If you work a lot this week and you work a lot less next week, I don't get any more work out of you, but I'm going to have to pay significant overtime for the week you're there," and the employee has to agree, "OK, fine. Let's average the overtime. It works for me at home with the kids, when I need to be, and I'm at work when my spouse is at home with the kids." Those are examples of permits requested. Those are actual permits requested.

Here's another one. A guy worked at a local arena. He came up and told me this in Etobicoke. He said, "I work at a local arena. I want to work 16 hours on Saturday and Sunday so I can get 32 hours of work in, and then I only have to work four more hours on Monday and I can have the whole week off to be at home with my newborn while my wife goes to work." I said, "That's what we're trying to accomplish here." He said, "I know." I said, "What did the union say?" "I can't tell the union." "Why?" "Because they won't let me do it." I said, "Why?" "Because they don't think it's good for me."

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, come on.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's exactly what he said. He said, "They don't think it's good for me."

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): That's just one.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm not suggesting—this is one; there are many permits. But that's just one guy who came up to talk to me, "I want to work a lot on the weekend so I can have the week off to be with my kid." That's what he said, "Because my wife works during the week and we have to pay for daycare and I don't want to leave my kid with someone else, I want to be there with them." "But I'm the government. I should know what's better for you, so we cannot allow you to do that." What kind of logic is that? Talk about government knowing better what's good for you than you know what's good for yourself. There are dozens of permit examples, hundreds of permit examples, of situations similar to that. That's what this bill says. By writing an agreement between the two parties, you can work out your own workweek.

Mr Bradley: I'm calling Bob Runciman. He used to be a labour leader.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm sorry, I missed that.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Listen, I just talked about that before you got here. If there is a problem—what we needed to do was beef up the number of inspectors and give them more power. That's what we've done, which is what you didn't do. But that's what we've done. We've hired more inspectors, given them more power to reinstate, subpoena records etc, so they can provide answers immediately rather than having to wait six or eight months to have it appealed to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. That's the thrust of the change. By mutual consent between the employee and the employer they can make these changes.

Are there bad employers? Yes, there are. No doubt there are bad employers.

Mr Bradley: The government of Ontario.

Hon Mr Stockwell: And the Liberal Party of Ontario—and there are bad employees. There are always going to be bad employees and there are always going to be bad employers. Let me say this: I think the vast majority of employers are good employers. I don't think anyone would argue with me.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: The majority of employers out there are good employers, and I don't believe it's like that. I believe fundamentally people are good; fundamentally, in the employment community, people are good.

The problem the unions have with this bill is this: they live in an adversarial society. Every collective agreement is a negotiation, bargaining, threats of strikes, of lockouts etc. That's how they do business. That's how the union and the employer work. But you know what? Outside of the union-employer relationship, most, the majority, aren't like that. There is a good situation.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): Why was it like that?

Hon Mr Stockwell: The member opposite says, "Why was it?" Well, potentially you're right. Some 30 or 40 or 50 or 60 years ago, it was probably necessary. But I think what we have here today is more enlightened employers and more enlightened employees. Look around the province at non-union places. Why is Dofasco not unionized? Because they're a good employer. Why is Magna not unionized? Because they're a good employer. They have a relationship that's different than the adversarial relationship between unions and employers.

I've worked for many people, as I'm certain a lot of people in this place have worked for many people, and it wasn't a union environment. I think those relationships that they had are good relationships. They are negotiated agreements. Most people go out and negotiate their own agreement with the employer. Most people go out there and say, "I'm prepared to negotiate an agreement." Lots of people vote not to have a union in their workplace. Why? They don't want a union in their workplace. Now, there are lots who do. Good for them; give them more power. I agree: take a union into the workplace. But there are lots of people who say, "No, I don't want a union. I think it's better without a union." That's the trouble we're having with the union/non-union situation.

The parental leave: a difficult decision. There's a concern out there in the small business community that it's going to cost them money, it's going to cost them time and it's going to cost them productivity. We agreed; we said all along the same thing. I said, "I'm going to consult with the private sector and ask the employer community what they think of the parental leave." They brought a lot of concerns to the table. At the end of the day we agreed that, "We understand your concerns, but we're going to move forward on a guaranteed job for 52 weeks." That was a difficult decision, but I think it was the right one, and it's a decision that we took through no intimidation or coercion. I talked in this House two or three times to Ms Martel; I'm not certain of her riding.

Mr Bradley: Nickel Belt.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Nickel Belt. I said to her very specifically, "We're consulting. We have not made a decision."

But to the employer community it's troubling. With four employees, if one of them goes on maternity leave and then parental leave for a year, that's 25% of your workforce gone. If you think that's something that is dealt with easily in a four-person workplace, it isn't. The employers were saying, "We're not against families, we're not against kids, but this is not an easy thing for us to do, to replace this employee, 25% of our workforce, for one year." But we adopted the reforms.

We put in family crisis leave. We're the first government in this country to institute a family crisis leave of 10 unpaid days off during a family crisis for employers with 50 employees or more: the first government in this country. Not the federal government nor any provincial government jurisdiction—we're the first that adopted this approach to family crisis leave.

Mr Agostino: Nowhere near enough.

Hon Mr Stockwell: The member for Hamilton East says, "Nowhere near enough." Look, I have a tough time keeping your position straight. I got a letter from four parents in your community who said to me that you promised that if the ERC declared jeopardy—

Mr Agostino: Name names.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'll provide the letter to you—you would in fact vote in favour of the bill. They were profoundly disappointed in you when you stood in this House and voted against the bill. So I don't think you should be talking about what's consistent, what's fair, what's enough and what's not enough. You're the guy who told them, in a meeting and on the phone, that you would vote in favour of forcing the teachers back to work, and you in fact didn't.

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Mr Agostino: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would ask the minister to withdraw those allegations, which are false. I believe you're not allowed to impugn motives or falsehoods in this Legislature. Those comments made by the minister were false and I would ask him to withdraw those comments.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order, but—

Hon Mr Stockwell: Listen, I'll show you the letter. I'm sure you got it. We got it, so I'm certain that they sent it to you.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, no. There were four parents, I think four women who were in his riding, who met with him at his constituency office, and he said to them, "If the ERC declares jeopardy, I promise I'll vote the teachers back to work" and then they talked to him on the phone subsequent to that and he said to them on the phone exactly the same thing. They say in the letter, "Imagine our shock to see you standing in this House telling everybody you're voting against this legislation, putting them back to work."

Mr Agostino: You're wrong again.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Look, that's what they said in the letter. That's what four of them said in the letter. They said that Mr Agostino gave them an undertaking at a meeting and then on the phone and he broke his word.

Mr Agostino: You're lying again.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Oh, look at that.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Hamilton East will have to withdraw that comment.

Mr Agostino: I withdraw.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You know when he starts saying that that you've obviously touched a nerve, and I think I've touched a nerve. I think those four parents touched a nerve as well.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I don't know what the member for St Catharines is talking about; I'm sure he hasn't seen the letter either. But I'm sure he's going to comment on it.

Anyways, talk about, "Eliminate the permit system," so that's what we did, up to the 60-hour workweek.

Mr Bradley: Can you tell us why this has changed?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I have no idea. I imagine Mr—

The vacation scheduling—you know what else they said? This is another one: if you have two weeks' holidays and you want to take them in less than one-week chunks—say you want to take them, as an employee in my office does, every Friday in August. If you want to take your holidays every Friday in August and have a long weekend every weekend, that's against the law according to the law today. So an employee who wants to go out every Friday and take a long weekend every Friday can't do it. It's against the law. They can't do that. They have to take their holidays in one-week periods. Do you know the permits we got requesting that "my holidays be taken one or two days at a time rather than a full week"? And then most of them didn't even apply, because they think it's so archaic and arcane that they didn't bother; they said, "This is ridiculous." So they have their holiday periods in two-week chunks but they take them one day at a time.

Mr Bradley: Why don't you let somebody else speak?

Hon Mr Stockwell: So we said, "That's reasonable." If an employee and an employer want to take their days one day at a time rather than in two-week chunks, what are we to say no to? We said if they agree in writing, you can take your holidays one day at a time in August. I mean, what's that? That just seems like a reasonable request.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Now the members opposite are saying, "Oh, my God, look at the coercion and intimidation. They're going to be forced to take them—" But what's the difference today, with this legislation, of forcing them to take them after than before? It's against the law to force them to take them one day at a time before this bill is passed, it's against the law to force them to take it one day at a time after this bill is passed,

so if you're going to intimidate and coerce, you're going to do it before and after. There's no difference. None. Zero. Zip. Nada. Not one whit of a difference, but they claim all the intimidation and coercion are going to rise up and percolate and bubble from the earth's core, and all these ugly employers are going to force people to take one day at a time who don't want to, but they never did it before even though they could have done exactly the same thing and it was against the law as well. That was their problem with vacations.

Overtime averaging—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Mr Speaker, I have just heard the member for St Catharines suggesting that there's somebody in this House who's taking up too much time speaking and they should share their wealth. I know the shock is going happen when it's the member for St Catharines making this allegation. My goodness. Maybe Sudbury, maybe Sarnia, but St Catharines? My goodness. It's all Bradley, all the time for some in this place.

So we put in the new enforcement measures. Do you know what else we did, which is really good? We put in a provision that in all workplaces you must post the employees' rights and they must be posted in a clear place, and then on that is a phone number so if they feel they're being intimidated and coerced they may call and anonymously complain that they're being intimidated. We've done that; we've said they can do that. We said that was a reasonable request that an employee should have.

Why that makes it better is that before they couldn't anonymously complain, so I could believe the fear the unions brought forward. Yes, there's fear of intimidation. If you have to register your name when you complain, then the employer's going to know it was you who complained and they're going to be out to get you. But by being able to complain anonymously, you've taken away that stigma.

Mr Agostino: How are they going to follow up if they don't know who you are?

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's a tough one, isn't it, member for Hamilton East.

The Acting Speaker: If the member for Hamilton East is going to heckle, he should be in his own seat at least, OK?

Hon Mr Stockwell: For the enlightenment of the public, he said, "How are they going to follow up if they don't know who you are?" They'll ask what company you work at and your name, but they won't tell the employer what your name is.

The Acting Speaker: If you're going to heckle—and I don't mind it from time to time—be in your own seat.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It must say someplace in our standing orders that if you're going to heckle, you should at least be intelligent.

That's the complicated thing, and I appreciate that was a complicated question: how are they going to—anyway, you get the gist. They take your name and your actual—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: This is your last warning and then you're out of here.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You know what? It's difficult for me if he does get heaved, because he's worth most of my good material in this place.

Let's talk about some other areas that have not fallen into line since 1968 with the Employment Standards Act. You really have to get your mind around the fact that with 18,000 permits in 24 sectors relieved from any responsibility of falling under the Employment Standards Act, there are hundreds of thousands of workers out there who fall under a different portion of the bill. So understand that as well. These portions were excluded by previous governments. They said, "Yes, this person can be excluded; this sector can be excluded. This permit is for you to be excluded."

You know what it became? The exclusions, when you started adding up the numbers, were becoming greater than the people who were obligated to live within the bill. In those 24 sectors were agriculture, which I understand from the Minister of Agriculture is the second-largest industry in the province, and tourism, which is, as I understand it, the biggest industry in the province. Both were excluded by sectoral outs. They did not even fall under the ESA. Mining, my friend from Sudbury knows, is a good example. It was excluded. There are others: hospitals were excluded. How many people work in hospitals? You get the message. It's millions we were getting up to—nuclear plants, manufacturing, mining, just to name a few industries.

We were getting to the point, because this bill was so archaic, that we had more exclusions than people who actually worked under the bill. It was becoming impossible. We were giving regulations, other governments were giving regulations, other governments were giving outs to sectoral areas. There were more people working outside the Employment Standards Act than were actually working inside it.

But there's this hue and cry to maintain the Employment Standards Act that wasn't working, that wasn't including everybody. The number of regulations and sectoral outs was unbelievable. Every government—the NDP, the Liberals and the Conservatives—was getting more people out of the Employment Standards Act through sectoral outs or through permit outs. They were allowing people to average their overtime. They were telling people you could take one day's holiday rather than a week at a time. It's not like these laws were being enforced. They weren't being enforced. You just wrote a permit and you got out. There were so many permits it was impossible to make the inspections. All the inspections were legitimate, when we finally got around to doing it, the employee and employer agreed. We were wasting a lot of time, effort and money trying to implement a bill that was archaic. It was antiquated, it was out of date.

Mr Bradley: Any other words you can think of to say the same thing?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I could probably think of a few more but I don't know if they'd be parliamentary, member for St Catharines.

That's the situation, so that was now.

I heard my two friends opposite from the east and west of Hamilton on the radio, on CFRB, on the weekend. It was unbelievable what they were peddling there. It was incredible, frankly, that they were offering up again these takes on the bill. As I said, I have no difficulty debating the bill, but I have difficulty when we're not really debating the bill, we're debating some manufactured idea about what they think the bill does. Again, I offered briefings to both of them on the bill. I'm not complaining; they're very busy people. They couldn't make that particular briefing and that's no slight. I'm sure they were busy.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Be fair; staff were there.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Oh, yes, your staff showed up. But they were too busy to come to the briefing on the bill. I understand that. But it would be helpful, in my opinion, if they could then put the questions about exactly what makes up this bill to the ministry people—they aren't political people; they're ministry people—just the fundamental nuts and bolts of the bill. They answered the questions. They could have found out that, yes, this was taken out. The charge was that there wasn't any public consultation on this bill. They both said it on a radio station on the weekend, that there was no public consultation.

Mr Bradley: Then it must be true.

Hon Mr Stockwell: There we are. See? The member for St Catharines says, "Well, it must be true." You see? If you say it, some naive people, who are not as well-read or learned or have not read the bill, will believe it, and he did. See? It's a perfect example. He believed it.

I'll tell you—London, Windsor, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Ottawa and Toronto: I went out and talked to people. The white paper was produced. There were way more unions than there were chambers of commerce. There were way more unions than business associations. There were a lot more unions that appeared before us than the other ones. Furthermore, since the bill's been introduced, I went to Oshawa last week to talk about the bill and I went to Sarnia on Friday to talk about the bill. So now, London, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Ottawa, Toronto, Sarnia and Oshawa—what are you talking about there's no consultation? That was a lot of consultation. I have listened. I listened to their concerns and some of their concerns made the final draft of the bill. I can list a whole whack of them that made the final draft of the bill because they made those deputations.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker: Clear the gallery. We're going to recess for 10 minutes.

The House recessed from 1924 to 1935.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: When the Minister of Labour was addressing the House and a protest commenced, in that process the

member for Hamilton East crossed the floor, approached my desk, and in fact was leaning on my desk in what I felt was a very intimidating fashion. Mr Speaker, I would request that you examine whether that was a threatening act provoking me, who was actually listening to the comments. For the record, the member for Hamilton East had been named by the Speaker—that's you—on about three different occasions during the progress of the minister's statement.

Personally, I'm fairly comfortable with someone being that aggressive, but I think it's completely out of order in this House for a member of the opposition to try to intimidate in a physical way. Today we're talking in a society that's supposed to be civil and understanding that there are different points of view on this legislation, and in fact all legislation. I personally feel quite affronted by it, very uncomfortable with it, and I think it sets a very poor example for all people in Ontario and specifically for youth who may be watching this tonight. So I'm wondering if you could make some sort of ruling on whether that's appropriate behaviour in the House.

The Acting Speaker: To the member for Durham, while all that happened, the House was in recess and I wasn't here. I have no reason to doubt the scenario you've painted. However, I would expect all members in this place, duly elected by their constituents, to assume to be honourable and that they would carry themselves in that manner in this place. I will expect for the rest of the evening that that's the way we will continue here or I will have to ask people to leave so that the rest of us can carry out the business of the province in an orderly and respectful fashion.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Just because the House is recessed does not mean we should have inadequate conduct in this House. I abhor this thing. I think it's—

The Acting Speaker: I have ruled on that point of order. Minister of Labour.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think I have about 18 minutes. I don't want to make your job any more difficult. Anyway, the thrust of the bill is as I explained it.

The concerns stem from a series of attacks that I've witnessed both personally and then obviously on the legislation. I don't mind people attacking the bill; that's what democracy is all about. You can attack the bill and argue the merits and condemn it if you see fit. But it seems to me that there's this idea out there that we are legislating a 60-hour workweek. The frustration I have is that, under the act, it's not that. We're not changing the workweek from 48 hours.

If the attacks were put that we're changing the law so that rather than getting a permit from the Ministry of Labour we're now expecting written consent between the employer and the employee to work a 60-hour workweek, I wouldn't have any problem with those charges, because they're actually true. But that's not what they're saying. They're saying that we're legislating a 60-hour workweek, and the fundamental fact of the matter is

simply that we are not. We are not changing the workweek at all.

There are also statements out there floating around, again from predominantly union executive members and others, that say we're going to allow employers not to pay overtime. We're not saying that. Under this legislation, after 44 hours everyone is entitled to overtime pay, and if you work more than 44 hours you're going to get overtime. Now, as I mentioned earlier, if you would like to make an agreement with your employer that averages your overtime so that you work less hours one week and more hours another and thereby can be at home or wherever you want to be on this second week or third week of a four-week period, then we're saying, "Yeah, sure, you can do that. We think you're capable of making these decisions on your own. We don't think you need the government meddling in a situation where you have agreement between the employer and the employee."

1940

If that's the way they were saying that if in future you agree to work different hours per week and you agree to average your overtime so then you won't be paid overtime, then I wouldn't have a problem with that statement. But that's not what they're saying either. They're simply saying the employer is now allowed to make you work more than 44 hours a week and doesn't have to pay you overtime. That just isn't true. That's against the law. That's against the law now, and if this bill is adopted, it will be against the law then. That's it, end of discussion: it's against the law.

The argument also put out there is that employers will intimidate and coerce. I'm sure there are employers that intimidate and coerce. As I said, I'm sure there are bad employers, but they can intimidate and coerce just as much before this bill is adopted as after this bill is adopted. The argument is that somehow we've never allowed people to work more than 48 hours a week, when, by permits, lots of people are allowed to work more than 48 hours a week. By opting out through a sector, millions of people are allowed to work more than 48 hours a week—millions. Millions of people are allowed to work more than 48 hours a week right now. That wasn't our law. That was a law that was accepted by the New Democrats; it was a law that was accepted by the Liberals; it was a law that was accepted by us. This idea that somehow we've determined that everyone out there is going to have to work more than 48 hours or there's now new people is absurd. It's patently absurd. But this is what's being offered up as debate.

So yes, I'm frustrated. I'm very frustrated. I'm frustrated because these people who offer up some knowledge of the bill, who I think are fairly bright people—if they read the bill, they'd know what the bill says—are not offering up that information honestly; they're just offering up what they think the public will oppose, even though that's not in the bill, and that's the frustration. It's a frustration for any government, I suppose, because the opposition and others can say what they like and determine whether or not the bill is reflective.

On my basic take, in this House I've found on legislation that's adopted a fairly responsible position on most bills, because there are fundamental differences between us and the NDP and the Liberals. We have a fundamentally different philosophy on how the government should manage. But in labour legislation, I find that the truth is surely the first casualty of any labour legislation. The truth is the first casualty. If you're opposed to the bill, then stand up and tell me why you're opposed to the bill. Tell me what part of the bill you don't like. I don't mind that. But at least understand what the bill says.

When I go out to these public hearings and I meet with people, like in Oshawa—Mr O'Toole and Mr Stewart were in Oshawa and Mr Jerry Ouellette from Oshawa was there. I talked to a whole bunch of union members out there, and do you know what they said? "I didn't know that. Gee, I don't have as much problem—I mean, I don't agree with some parts of the bill, there are thrusts of the bill I don't like, but I've got to tell you, I didn't know a lot of that. I don't feel nearly as uncomfortable with this bill now that you've actually explained it to me." That was the response from the people, and they were not Conservatives. Well, they probably voted Conservative, but they're union members. They voted Conservative. Mr Ouellette won by a landslide. He got a lot of union votes in Oshawa.

So there's the situation. When they finally heard about the bill, they said to me things like, "OK, I still have a problem with parts of this bill. I don't think I'm agreeing with other sections of this bill. But it is not nearly what has been explained to me by the union executives I met with. I thought you were legislating a 60-hour workweek. I thought you were saying we weren't going to be allowed to be paid overtime any more. I thought the bill said that you get to only take one day of holidays at a time; you can't put them together." They actually thought this. They believed that. They believed that that's what the bill said. So yes, that's a frustration.

I don't think it's a fair take on the bill. If you have fundamental differences with the bill, then so be it.

With the closing 10 minutes, I think what we should talk about is what I believe is a good part of this bill: how we modernize the workplace. If the members opposite are suggesting to me that there's some problem with the bill, I would like them to tell me how they propose to modernize the workplace in order to make it more effective for the year 2000.

In 1968, this bill was adopted by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario—1968. Even the most hard-hearted members across the floor would have to admit that the typical workplace in Ontario has dramatically changed from 1968 to the year 2000. This bill was adopted seven years before the member for Renfrew got elected for the first time to sit in this place.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I wasn't born then.

Hon Mr Stockwell: This bill was adopted nine years before the member for St Catharines got here. The

member for Niagara Falls wasn't even born when this bill was adopted in 1968.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's what I'm talking about. If you're going to oppose the legislation to modernize the workplace, even the most hard-hearted would have to admit that the bill needs some revision, the bill needs some changes. This is change. No longer is the office 9 to 5, you just go to the office downtown, catch the subway and go home. Lots of people don't even work in an office setting any more. Lots of people work from their home with the advent of computers and fax machines and mobile phones. Lots of people just work out of their car. The workplace has changed, and to ask the Ministry of Labour to apply and to enforce a piece of legislation that is so outdated and antiquated, to force the people of this province to work under these terms and conditions—you're protecting nobody because the bill is so flawed, so contradictory, so difficult to work with. And this came from the unions as well. It's antiquated. It's out of date. It doesn't work.

In some sections of this bill and the public holiday act, you go from the bill to a regulation that takes you back to the bill that refers you to another regulation to find out if you get your day off or not. That's how distorted this bill has become.

Listen, I know full well that the previous administration, the NDP, were looking at changing the Employment Standards Act had they had the legislative calendar time to do so.

Mr Bradley: No, I don't believe that.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It was true, the Employment Standards Act, because they thought at the time as well that this was in fact the best thing to do.

In closing, I want to say this too: there's a level of inconsistency in the NDP's argument as well, that somehow this is an attack upon families and upon parents and upon children and all that kind of stuff. That was the lead argument they used, maybe a couple of weeks ago. They've changed somewhat, but that was their lead argument.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Maybe they haven't changed, then. Sorry, the member for Hamilton West, they haven't changed.

I've got to tell you, this is modernizing the workplace and allows people the flexibility of making their workweek fit the needs of their family.

I guess the inconsistent part of the NDP's argument is that the biggest attack on families, in my opinion, according to their doctrine and according to their previous campaign commitments, was Sunday shopping. There was a situation where I think it could be universally agreed that there was a consistent position from the NDP before being elected in 1990 that they were opposed to Sunday shopping. They told the whole world that Sunday shopping was an attack on families.

I find it passing strange that they would have the—there are other terms, but let's just say the courage to

suggest that we are attacking the family by amending the Employment Standards Act to make the workweek more flexible so it works for families, when they themselves introduced the Sunday shopping bill. It was supposed to be a sacrosanct position that would never be debated in the NDP caucus, that they would never allow Sunday shopping. It would destroy families and destroy children and destroy all those wonderful things that not working on Sunday provided. This is what happens when you end up with a track record: your words and your deeds and your legislation tend to come back to haunt you when you want to challenge and you want to cast aspersions and motivation on other governments.

1950

This bill is designed to help families create a workweek that provides more time for them to spend together. That time may be Saturdays and Sundays; I don't know. It may be Mondays and Tuesdays. It may be Thursdays and Fridays. I can't tell you how the typical family wants to structure their workweek to make it more acceptable for them. I can tell you that I dismiss their argument with respect to attacks on families when they were the administration that told us Sunday shopping was bad and then introduced legislation allowing Sunday shopping. I'm not certain how they square these circles. I'm not certain how you do that in your mind: square these circles of the consistency of public hearings argument and the social contract or attack on families and introducing legislation that allows Sunday shopping. I'm not sure how they square these circles, how they can find any sense of consistency, how they can offer any sense of reliability in the debate. When they had the levers of power all-holy policies came tumbling down among them.

I have a difficulty with that and I have a difficulty in being hectorated, lectured and harangued by members of that caucus when it comes to family values, family time, when they made these kinds of decisions when they were in government. It appears to me that they have convenient policy sets, one for opposition and one for government. The reason we never knew that before is they simply never ever formed a government until 1990. I want to get that on the record very clearly before they go off half-cocked and complaining about this attack on families. They were the ones, people of Ontario, who introduced legislation to allow Sunday shopping.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: And I'm not even going to talk about photo radar, because I don't have enough time.

Mr Bradley: It's not relevant to the debate.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I could probably find a relevance, I'm certain.

In summation, this bill is designed, built and written to help people design workweeks that best reflect their needs as individuals. This is the difference between the opposition and the government. We believe that individuals are capable of making decisions for themselves. We believe that individuals are capable of deciding what is the best approach for them to take that best serves their

needs and their family needs. What the opposition believes—as I said, it's fundamental—is that government is best to decide what is good for the electorate. I think over time we've proven, if anything, that by empowering the people, allowing them to keep their money—as Mr Eves outlined I think very clearly yesterday, this economy is bubbling along like never before—allowing them to make decisions that best reflect their needs, you end up with an employable society with low unemployment rates, low welfare rates and very good job opportunities that in the end, by reducing taxes, generate more taxes and allow at the end of the day for a society of individuals who make their own decisions that affect their lives, who make the decisions based on their needs, which make for a good community.

There's the difference. I think the people of Ontario are old enough and bright enough to determine how they would like their workweek scheduled; old enough and bright enough to know when they'd like to take their vacations; old enough and bright enough to determine how long they're going to work and how they're going to work. I don't think it's an unreasonable request that we give the power to the people and to individuals to take these decisions and get government out of their faces, but provide protection—and that's the most important part—provide protection, increase the inspectors by 20% and give them more power. Where there is an unfair employer, where there is coercion and intimidation, increase the fines—double them—provide the possibility of incarceration for the employers and come down very heavily, as I've said, on employers who try to take advantage of individuals. That's the approach to take, because that approach will do both things: give flexibility and freedom, and enforce the law to protect those who need protection.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Ms Di Cocco: The honourable member, Minister Stockwell, certainly makes a very selective argument as to his government's position on this bill. As I was sitting here, I was thinking that sometimes we have so much hot air in this place that we could float.

With regard to this labour bill, I want to say there is an assumption that organized labour is to be vilified. The minister was in Sarnia-Lambton, and about 800 people came to hear him. I don't think there was a favourable atmosphere in that place. I don't know if you sensed that at all, Minister, but it was not a favourable environment.

When we talk about labour and about consultation, it just happens that 800 people showed up in Sarnia-Lambton and were very upset about this bill. They must all be wrong. They must all have the wrong slant on this. That's why they're upset.

When we talk about all the inroads that have been made, inroads have been made vis-à-vis organized labour. What we consistently hear—I fundamentally disagree with the minister on this. We should be taking all of the best that has been accomplished through organized labour, and we should be bringing all of Ontario society up to that level, not the other way around, and that's what

these bills do. Again, I fundamentally disagree with that position.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the minister's comments. I would say to the minister that it is very much my intention to take up the challenge he offered this evening, which is to speak to this bill in its detail as produced in the bill and talk about where we may have different interpretations, different motivations and different outcomes. Unfortunately, I'll probably only get about five or 10 minutes tonight, but I understand it's on the floor tomorrow afternoon, and I'll be first up after question period and will continue then. It would be nice if you were in the House for that; I'd appreciate that very much. I say all this to say I very much intend to speak to this bill and obviously can be held to that.

What I want to do in the one minute that's left in these brief remarks is talk about something you didn't even mention that is an important part of the Employment Standards Act. You talked earlier about challenging us about what we would do to reflect the modern times, that we're in a new millennium, it's the year 2000. What about the minimum wage? One of the fundamental obligations of the Employment Standards Act is to set out the bare floor minimum you can pay someone to work in this province. You're not moving that forward at all. If you are, you've kept it a secret. It's at \$6.85. It was at \$6.85 when we last increased it in 1995. You haven't moved it up a bit.

What's interesting—and a lot of people should reflect on this—is that we are now behind the United States in the minimum wage. Most people never grew up with that. In fact, they've had two increases since 1995, and the President of the United States has called for a third increase. Maybe in your two-minute response, Minister, you can tell us why you deemed to leave the lowest-paid workers in our province behind during this great economic boom you're bragging about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Questions and comments?

2000

Mr Maves: To the member opposite on the last point, at least there are over 800,000 people who are working today in this province who weren't working when his party was in office.

I want to comment on the minister's 60 minutes. One of the comments that has come from across the way is there hasn't been any consultation done.

Interjection.

Mr Maves: There's been a whack of consultation done on this bill, starting with and even before the consultation paper went out. There were public hearings and all kinds of consultation on the consultation paper on reforming the Employment Standards Act. As the minister indicated, there had been some discussions with labour and with business even before 1995 because the NDP government was looking at making changes. So there's been a whack of consultation.

He was just recently in Sarnia-Lambton, as the member opposite from Sarnia-Lambton talked about. My understanding of that situation, because I've talked to some folks who were there, is that there were 700 people who came into the room and they came in with all kinds of mythology floating around in their heads because, as the minister explained, there are all kinds of mythology floating around out there about the bill. The minister set about, as he did tonight, and very cogently, very clearly and logically talked about this bill, what it really was about and what was really involved in the bill, and just like a lot of the members opposite tonight, as he was explaining, they were nodding or at least putting their heads down and going ahead with some other business because they could understand his logic. By the end of the night, those people in Sarnia who had come in with all of the mythology walked out of that room talking to a lot of people saying, "H'm, it's not all that they told me it was."

I commend the minister. He's done a wonderful job getting the bill to this point. He's done a great job of consultation and he did a great job here tonight.

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I know the minister says we're in changing times, and we are. I know in our part of Ontario many of the construction workers are working a four-day week at the present time, Monday to Thursday, with an agreement in place that in an emergency they would work on the weekend. It seems to be working extremely well. The other thing is, the minister and people across the floor have been saying how great things here are in Ontario, and I agree they are better than they were, but they're taking all the credit for a booming American economy for which we're manufacturing all kinds of material and shipping it out of the country. The other thing is low interest rates, which I don't think this government can take any credit for.

The other thing I want to say is, I don't think people exactly trust this government. They figure that things are being shoved down their throats with very little consultation. If the government would give more of an opportunity to have hearings and listen to the workers and the residents of Ontario, I think it would be much better. That way, when there's consultation and committee hearings, a little bit of give and take, everybody is happy and it pays off in the long run.

But anyway, I guess the government has decided this is the type of bill they want. I know there are mistakes, but hopefully someone will come to their senses and listen and try to work it out. It will be good for the government, it will be good for the residents of Ontario and it will be good for the workers, because without the workers there are lots of problems here and we don't need tension. There are enough problems in the workforce now.

The Deputy Speaker: Response, Minister of Labour.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I want to thank the members for Sarnia-Lambton, Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, Niagara Falls and Hamilton East.

Mr Christopherson: West.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm sorry, Hamilton West. My apologies. The four-day week you talked about in construction out in Cornwall, that's the kind of thing this bill would allow. Right now, it's illegal.

Mr Bradley: They can do it now.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Only by getting a permit, but other than that, it's illegal.

Mr Bradley: It works well.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's the point we're trying to make. The permits are shipped in and we don't have time to inspect them all, there are so many requests. We can't possibly get around to inspect them all. The point that needs to be made is that's exactly what we're driving at here.

To the member for Sarnia-Lambton, look, I went to that meeting. I thought it was a healthy meeting. Sure, there was a divergence of opinion. It was mostly Bill 69. It didn't have a lot to do with employment standards. It mostly talked about Bill 69 and the 40% mobility rate that's provided in that bill. It didn't have a lot to do with ESA; a couple of questions on maternity leave, but that was pretty much it. So to say it was employment standards, well, there were some questions, but predominantly it was Bill 69.

To the member for Niagara Falls, I couldn't have said it better. He said it very clearly. I liked his comment, too, to the member for Hamilton West after, with respect to 800,000 people working.

To the member for Hamilton West on the minimum wage, you can't just take slices of time and pull them out and say, "OK, the minimum wage hasn't been raised in five years." If you're going to do that, you're right. But when you take the 1990s, which is a period of time that's a fair appropriation of how much money was increased in the minimum wage, the minimum wage went up in the 1990s by 37%. There weren't a lot of people out there—

Mr Christopherson: We did that.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm not denying that you did, but it went up 37% in the 1990s, 3.7% increases compounded on top of that for the 10 years in the 1990s. That's not chicken feed. That's a big, healthy increase—37%. Not a lot of people got that kind of increase.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Agostino: I'm pleased to lead off on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus in this debate tonight with regard to the latest government bill that affects labour in this province, that affects working men and women in this province.

Clearly, when you look at this legislation, you have to look at it in the context of what has been the history of this government when it comes to dealing with labour. Right from the beginning, this government has made labour and working men and women a prime target. First, they started to do it at every opportunity by demonizing people who opposed them. Labour leaders, people who are elected democratically to represent working men and women, are labelled as special interests, they're labelled as union bosses, as they call them, as if somehow they

don't have the legitimate right to represent the working men and women they are elected to be there for.

Look at the history. Frankly, there were pretty good labour relations in this province until five or six years ago. There were a lot of problems prior to that. When you look at the last few weeks, and I'm not going to go back much further than two or three weeks with regard to the legislation, the first round of attack was Bill 69, which was just passed. That is a bill that threatens to destabilize what is a very active, very well-moving construction and building industry across this province. That was done, of course, without consultation; we know that. Clearly, building trades and construction trades in this province opposed that bill. The government decided it had to move, forgetting the history. This is the danger with this bill tonight, as it was with Bill 69.

They forget the historical perspective of what brought about changes, particularly as they affected the previous bill in the construction trade, for example, in the building industry. They have short memories. They forget what happened on picket lines in the 1960s and the early 1970s. They forget the shutdowns, they forget the demonstrations, they forget the firebombings, they forget the violence, and they forget the royal commission that was carried out as a result of that. That brought about many of those changes that this government is just about to dismantle and has gone about dismantling as it applies to the construction trade.

So they brought in Bill 69; again, rammed it down without one moment of public consultation. It wasn't important to talk to the people of Ontario, it wasn't important to talk to working men and women, and it wasn't important to talk to those in this province who were going to be affected by this legislation. As we remember, they withdrew the bill. The minister came back a week later, the bill was back in and a few days later it was the law of the land in this province.

2010

Today at committee we had clause-by-clause; the three parties were given a total of six minutes each to debate at committee today another significant piece of labour legislation, which was Bill 139. Six minutes per caucus was what was allocated today to debate that bill at committee, another significant piece of legislation that is really moving in a direction to destabilize unions in this province, a piece of legislation that the minister freely agreed, when he was asked in scrums, was asked for by business. He said that business wanted that. The legislation was written by business.

When you look at that piece of legislation as it ties into the rest of this, one of the interesting aspects of the bill is the fact that under the guise of trying to protect taxpayers, the government basically put a provision in that allowed greater ability for non-unionized companies to bid on so-called public sector contracts: school boards, hospitals, other types of municipal operations. That was under the guise of, "Look, if you allow that, that means the taxpayers will get a break and will get a better deal

because there's more competition." That was the argument they used.

First of all, it's a flawed argument as it is, because what you're doing is driving wages down, driving working conditions down and driving health and safety down. But that aside for a second, what was interesting there is the banks somehow got snuck in there. Explain to me how banks use taxpayers' dollars and somehow or other banks' getting a so-called better deal is going to help the taxpayers of Ontario. Maybe their profits will go from \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion over the next two or three years, which will help the banks and their shareholders, but certainly it does absolutely nothing for the taxpayers of Ontario. You look at those types of bills as we get to this bill we're at tonight and you look at what has motivated the government, again without one minute of public hearings on the legislation.

Now tonight we face the start of second debate on this piece of legislation in front of us, Bill 147. Let's understand who this applies to. Most of the people who are affected by this bill are not union members, are not protected by unions. The government and the minister like to speak about union bosses and special-interest groups and somehow they don't have this right to speak out on behalf of their members. Let's understand this: this piece of legislation that we're debating here tonight has the potential ability to impact on five million working men and women across the province of Ontario, five million working men and women who do not have the protection of a union, who do not have union representatives they can turn to to advocate on their behalf. They're often low-wage earners, they're often people who work in so-called sweatshops, they're often new immigrants, they're often people who are single mums trying to struggle, they're often people who are trying make ends meet from day to day to day; those are the people you're impacting by the legislation that you pass here.

What I find most disturbing and insulting about this piece of legislation is that they throw in one part of it, which is the maternity leave, and hold that hostage to the rest of the bill. This maternity leave was approved by the federal government in June. It kicks in in January 2001. This government has had since June—and we saw the great wiggle on this and the great flip-flop. It wasn't an issue, the Premier said, that no one had asked him about. The minister said it wasn't a priority. On and on it went. Finally, they brought this bill in after there were a number of requests from the opposition, a private member's bill from Ms Martel of the NDP, questions in this House. The government finally saw the light, and they got dragged kicking and screaming into this.

But what do they do? They tie in a piece of legislation that everyone agrees to, that pretty well all members in all three parties agree to and could probably pass in a day.

Mr Bradley: A hostage.

Mr Agostino: They put all this in, as my colleague from St Catharines says, as a hostage in this bill. With

that exception, that piece of legislation is flawed, is anti-worker, is anti-working men and women across this province. But they throw this in to try to somehow play politics with the opposition on this and say, "The opposition doesn't support this. The opposition voted against this maternity leave provision." Again, they're not really interested in the issue here, because if they were they would separate that particular item, they would take that particular item out; we could pass that in a day. Then we could get on with public hearings on the rest of the bill.

The minister talks about the consultation that went on with this. Let's make it clear. The consultation was over the summer on a draft white paper, as it's called, that had a whole slew of potential recommendations in it. There hasn't been one day, one hour, one moment or one second of public hearings on the bill as it stands in front of us today. That is unequivocal; it is unchallenged. Anybody who would suggest that there have been any public hearings on this particular bill we're debating tonight is wrong and inaccurate; clearly, not one moment of public hearings on such a significant piece of legislation.

The government members say, "We don't have time to do it because the provision on maternity leave kicks in in January. We can't go to public hearings and travel when the House is sitting." Those are the excuses. Again, a very simple suggestion: you take that portion out, we pass that in a day or two with regard to maternity leave, and then you take the bill out in January for public hearings. But they're not concerned about that.

Look at the difference: this bill impacts five million Ontarians—not one moment of public hearings. We had a bill a few months back that had something to do with snowmobile trails. As important as that is for some parts and some people in this province, and I don't diminish that—but remember, this government took it on the road and had public hearings on snowmobile trails, but doesn't believe it is important enough to have public hearings on a piece of legislation that fundamentally impacts the lives of five million Ontarians. Five million Ontarians who are affected by this legislation don't have a say. Let me tell you, if it is worthwhile and necessary to hold public hearings on snowmobile trails, and if it's the determination of the government that's important, I say to you that I believe it's just as important, if not more important, to have public hearings on a piece of legislation that impacts five million Ontarians in their ability to earn a living, in their ability to take care of their families, in their ability to go to work, in their ability to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace in this province. Certainly, this bill does none of that.

The government talks about the balance that is in this bill. I'll get to the details of it, but they talk about the balance, "You can refuse the 60-hour workweek. You can refuse overtime. You can negotiate your vacation time." That is not living in the real world. It sounds wonderful. They keep talking about balance in all of this, that somehow someone making minimum wage, working

and getting by in a small place without protection from anyone has the balance to be able to say, "I'm sorry, I'm not going to work the extra hours. I'm protected by the Employment Standards Act, so you'd better make sure that you abide by what I say." That is not the real world. Realistically, there is no balance here. Any piece of decent legislation would have to be balanced and would mean that there's equal power here. For anyone to suggest that the employer and the employee are equal when it comes to the power they hold in the workplace, it is an absolutely outrageous and ridiculous suggestion.

I speak, and members across the floor can say I'm biased because I'm the opposition and I disagree with this government fundamentally, but let me read something to you—

Mr Gill: What I'm saying is you are bullying.

Mr Agostino: The parliamentary assistant keeps heckling. If he would just listen for a change, maybe he would learn something.

Let me read something to you from Friday, December 1, in the Toronto Sun by Christina Blizzard, who I believe has generally been supportive of the direction of this government and generally has been supportive of the actions of this government over the past few years. Let me see what Ms Blizzard has to say about the Employment Standards Act. She says:

"What is most disturbing about this overhaul of the Employment Standards Act is that it affects the working conditions of non-union workers—the people who have no protection. And the people who will be hit the most are the people at the low end of the labour pool—the cleaning ladies, the garment workers, the people whose only protection right now is the Employment Standards Act. They are the people least able to speak for themselves and most vulnerable to greedy employers."

That's not me as the opposition saying that; that's Christina Blizzard, who generally agrees with what this government does. Ms Blizzard goes on to say:

"What is most offensive about the way Stockwell is doing this is the fact that there have been no hearings. Apart from a few brief consultations last August, there has been no opportunity for people like Samuelson and Ryan to tell Stockwell about their objections.

"This is wrong. This law is the bedrock of labour relations in the province and the proposals change working conditions fundamentally. There should be full hearings. It is entirely cynical for the government to use the increased maternity leave as a Trojan horse for bringing in massive changes to the labour legislation. The Tories knew they would have to change maternity leave anyway, since the feds have already mandated it and there is a great deal of public pressure to make it law."

Again, that is not a member of the opposition saying it. That is Christina Blizzard in the Toronto Sun talking about this government's legislation. She goes on:

"Look, the Tories keep saying tax cuts create jobs because they put more money in the hands of workers. By the same logic, people who get paid overtime have more money to put into the economy, thereby creating

more jobs. Don't cut the pay of those at the bottom of the scale in order to pad the executive bonuses of the bosses.

"Overhaul labour legislation to restore the balance, sure, but don't tip the scales too far the other way."

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Certainly, I think that is put well and in perspective as an overview of the impact of the legislation and this government's proposals that we're talking about here today.

When you look at the changes, they talk about the 60-hour workweek instead of moving in a direction where we say we're going to reduce the workweek, we're going to make the basis for overtime lower than it is now so people can get overtime quicker, as most European countries move toward a 35-hour workweek, as most industrialized countries start moving toward a 35-hour workweek. In 1884, the provincial government passed legislation saying that women and youths could be scheduled to work only 10 hours a day and 60 hours in a week. That legislation was passed 116 years ago. This is how far back we're going: 116 years ago there was legislation that for certain groups limited a workweek to 60 hours. We're sitting here in the year 2000 and this government is bringing in legislation for a 60-hour workweek.

They talk about flexibility again. They talk about the ability to refuse this work, the ability to have some balance in what we see here today. That is not the case. What you're going to get is people working longer hours for less money, being coerced to work and basically feeling they have no choice but to work those hours and not turn it down. Clearly we know the impact. They talk about flexibility, how 60 hours gives flexibility and people can choose their hours more. I'm not sure how many daycare centres are open with that type of flexibility, if that's what you want to give, where you think there's a choice where they can pick and choose the hours they want to work and this is what this bill is all about. That is not the case.

Then they talk about overtime with this. They say it doesn't impact it because you can still get overtime after 44 hours, that it gives you the flexibility to average it out over a four-week period. I'll just give you one small example that's been used. Over a four-week period you work one week at 52 hours and you work the other three weeks at 40 hours per week. That gives you an average of 43 hours per week. You know what that means? You don't get one single cent in overtime pay. Under the old system you would have been paid overtime in that 52-hour workweek. When you average it out over the—the Minister of Agriculture is suggesting I'm wrong. I hope you use your two minutes to explain to me how that is wrong. When you work 52 hours, 40, 40 and 40, it averages it out over the four-week period that the legislation allows to 43 hours per week. That makes you, on average, fall one hour under the overtime of the 44 hours in the legislation. That means that this individual, who under the old legislation today would receive eight hours of overtime, gets ripped off for eight hours, stolen

out of their paycheque to the benefit of the employer—eight hours of overtime. That is indisputable. That is in the legislation. That is allowed.

You tell me how this flexibility helps a single mom struggling to get by, needing every cent she can get, who even under your terms chooses to work that 52 hours but now gets ripped off for those eight hours of overtime under this legislation. The government has made no move to address that. There was no amendment suggested to address that. Nothing that was said would suggest that. Very clearly that is wrong. Why is it fair today—even though 44 hours I think is higher than it should be—for someone who works over 44 hours to get paid overtime, and under your system with that scenario they would be ripped off for those eight hours of overtime? How does that help? How does that help that individual? It doesn't. It simply helps the employer, and this is what this is all about.

They talk about vacation time, and again the minister talks about flexibility. It's that famous word. They like to talk about balance, "You can be flexible when you take your vacations. You can be flexible in the hours you want to work." This basically means, with this legislation, that, frankly, an employer can dictate when you take your vacations and in what kind of blocks you take your vacations. Again, they can say to you, "Take one day a week. That is your 10 days. You take them over 10 weeks, whether you want to or not." Again, the minister says you have the right to refuse. Where again is the balance there? Do you really have the right to refuse? Does anybody in their heart and in their mind really believe that there isn't a question of pressure, there isn't a question of fearing to lose your job, there isn't a pressure of there being nobody there to protect you? There's the fact that you believe if you lose that job that may be the only income you have and you may lose any opportunity to be able to look after your family. Do you really believe that you're going to turn around and say, "No, I'm not going to do it," and not have the fear of losing that job under this legislation?

Let's face it, this is not a government that has been known to be friendly to working people. This is not a government that's been known to go to bat for working men and women in this province. They're not unionized. They're the most vulnerable. They're not people who can afford the protection of the auto workers or steelworkers or many other organizations that do such a great job of looking after and protecting the interests of their members. These folks don't have that luxury and that advantage, and you're making it easier for them to be exploited and taken advantage of under this legislation.

Another section of this bill is emergency crisis leave, 10 days of annual leave for family emergencies. Although it's a start, let me suggest to you that it's inadequate, insufficient and nowhere near the need that is out there. Let's understand that if you have a family member, if you have a relative—a mother, a son, a daughter or a brother—who's dying of cancer, who has a chronic illness, who is in the last few months of their

lives, do you really believe 10 days are going to be sufficient? Do you really believe that simply 10 days are going to give you the time you need to be there and spend it with them?

My father died of cancer six years ago. He was diagnosed and within four months he passed away. I was a member of city council at that time. It was a time of the year when council wasn't sitting. I was fortunate enough to have the flexibility to be able to spend almost every moment of those last two months that my father was at home with him. I was fortunate to be in that position. I could be there, I was there day and night and, frankly, it was probably the most valuable two months of my life that I spent with my father. I was fortunate to be in that position. It is two months I will never ever forget and it is two months I will never ever regret spending there.

But if I hadn't had that flexibility, if I hadn't been fortunate enough to be in a position where I could take that time, where I could do that, do you really believe that in my situation, or in the similar situation of many others in this Legislature or many others across the province, 10 days is going to be sufficient to do that? I don't think so.

During the last election campaign we proposed 12 weeks. Is that enough? In some cases it may not be enough. That's not necessarily the magic answer here, but certainly I know that 10 days is not enough to deal with those types of family situations. Any of us who have been through that I think in our heart of hearts understand that.

We're not suggesting with pay. We're suggesting those it should be greater than 10 days without pay. If you have a son or daughter who's injured in an accident and you want to be at home with them, you should not have to lose your job. You shouldn't have to choose between looking after a son or daughter who needs your help, or looking after a dying parent, and your job. You should not have to make that choice in the year 2000 in the province of Ontario; and 10 days doesn't give you that option.

As much as I believe it's a start, I urge this government that we have an opportunity through committee, through amendments, to change and increase that, to make it much more in tune with the real needs that are there today.

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In the few minutes I have left, because I want to turn some of my time over to my colleagues who want to speak on this, I'm really concerned over the instability that this legislation is going to cause to labour relations in Ontario. Tied in with the other three pieces of legislation that have been passed, the other three bills that we have passed in this House—Bill 139, Bill 147 and Bill 69—which all combined will be law in the Ontario by Christmas, I think we're threatening to erode the fundamental balance that has existed in the province when it comes to labour relations. I believe that is dangerous. I don't think that is healthy in a democracy.

I think when you have an economy that for various reasons—the government can take credit for it, as they always do. The federal government takes credit for it; Bill Clinton takes credit for it; everybody believes they're responsible, I guess, in their own way for this booming economy. But when you have such a booming economy, when you have people working, when you have good economic times, why would you threaten that stability, why would you threaten labour relations with this type of regressive labour legislation that smacks of American right-wing Republican agendas rather than the moderate balance the people of Ontario are looking for?

You're threatening, as I said earlier, the construction industry with Bill 69. In Bill 139 you make it more difficult for workplaces to unionize and make it easier for workplaces to decertify and be non-unionized. Again, let me go back to that. I want to quote one of your own members who talks about the impact of Bill 139. Let's understand that part of Bill 139 is where the government says, "We're making it law now that you must post in unionized workplaces information on how to decertify." So if you have a union in a workplace, the government says now the law of the province means that you must post the process for getting rid of that union.

We have suggested on this side of the House that if that's fair and you believe that's fundamentally the way you should go, then you would think that when you talk about balance, you would allow the same thing on the other side, which simply would mean that in non-unionized workplaces across Ontario you would make it law that there'd be the posting of information on how to organize a union. That's fair. That's balanced. On the one hand, you're saying, "If you unionize, here's how you can get out of the union." On the other hand, they're saying, "If you're not unionized, here's how you can become part of a union."

The government doesn't believe that, but I'm glad some government members do speak out under their conscience and on their own. Mr Bill Murdoch, the member for Bruce-Grey said—and I'll be fair, I'll read the whole quote:

"It's not enough to make me vote against the bill, but it would be easier to say, 'This is how you decertify' and 'This is how you certify.' Two packages.... You just postpone them both.

"Why didn't they put up how to certify as well? They're leaving that up to the unions—'If you want to certify, go ahead.' I guess that would be the argument. I don't care whether [workers] decertify or not, but it should be their choice."

It's not said by a member of the opposition but by a member of the government, Mr Murdoch, the member for Bruce-Grey. You should listen to him. He speaks well here. He speaks with wisdom. He talks about balance. This is what is lacking with all of this legislation. Again, I urge this government, you still have an opportunity to do the right thing. You still have an opportunity to go beyond the rhetoric and the anti-labour bent you have.

I understand what's driving this. Let's not kid ourselves. With every single piece of legislation I challenge the minister or any government member to tell us which worker representatives have come forward and said to the government, "Bring in Bill 69," "Bring in Bill 147," or, "Bring in Bill 139." I challenge you: name names. Give me one labour organization or one labour leader who represents working men and women in the workplaces who have said, "Bring in this bill." I challenge you to do that. I hope you take that opportunity tonight or tomorrow in the debate to tell us who these people are.

If you talk about balance, if you're talking about a need, you would think the need would be recognized on both sides. Let me tell you what's driving this. This is being driven by business, by big business, friends of this government. We know with Bill 69 it was the Big Eight contractors who donate in excess of \$100,000 to \$150,000 a year to this government. We know that. They asked for it. They were pretty upfront about it. It wasn't some hidden deal. They said, "That's what we asked for."

Chambers of commerce across this province have praised these other two pieces of legislation. That's their job; they represent businesses. That is the job of the chamber of commerce. Their job is to represent business and they've been pretty open about it. They've said, "This is great. This is what we've wanted." So what you have here are three pieces of labour legislation that have become a wish list for businesses.

The banks—I still can't get over that one. That has to be the most hilarious part of this whole thing, how the government feels it needs to protect banks. With profits of \$2 billion a year, they need the protection of the Mike Harris government, or is it that Mike Harris needs the bank to pay \$25,000 per table to be at their fundraiser. Is that maybe what's driving this? I don't think the banks need the protection of this government when it comes to union and non-unionized contractors.

If you look at all these pieces, if you look at what's in front of us today, the agenda is clear here. This is not an agenda of respect for workers, of balance for workers, of rights for workers; this is an agenda of business. Business has a right in this province to donate to any party they want, business has a right to flourish and make money and employ people and grow. That is exactly what makes our system work, that is what makes our province work. But they should not get special treatment and be privileged because they have access to this government or because they donate to this government. That does not give them access and privilege when it comes to legislation, and this is what this legislation is all about, this is what these bills are all about.

I urge this government to restore some balance, to restore some sanity when it comes to labour legislation, because, particularly in this last piece, you're not impacting unionized workers. As much as you may not like the union bosses and you may not like their style, their job is to represent their workers. But understand one

thing: this last piece of legislation we're debating here tonight affects five million vulnerable Ontarians who don't have that protection and so they need this government to protect them, not to go out and destroy them.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, I need to know who the members are who will be participating.

Mr Agostino: The members for Sarnia-Lambton and St Catharines. Sorry, Mr Speaker.

Ms Di Cocco: I'm pleased to debate yet another labour bill, Bill 147. As the member from Hamilton East has already stated, and as has been stated this evening, it's An Act to revise the law related to employment standards. It has been the common theme in all of the labour bills from the Harris government that they're not intended to protect the interests of the workers and families in this province. There is a systematic approach to introduce and pass anti-labour legislation. I believe they're widely viewed as an attack on organized labour.

Bill 139 made it tougher for unions to organize, and Bill 69 undermines construction unions outside Toronto by allowing unionized contractors to hire non-union workers. Bill 147 raises the ceiling on the legal workweek to 60 hours from 48 hours. It is to Bill 147 that I'm going to speak.

This act applies to five million Ontario workers who are non-unionized and who do not work for federally regulated companies, and in many cases this is the low-wage worker.

I attended a meeting, and we alluded to this earlier in the debate, in Sarnia-Lambton with Minister Stockwell, and I listened to some significant arguments made by numerous individuals at that meeting. One of the people who attended was Ron Carlton of the carpenters' union, and he made a significant point at that meeting. His point was that if the government values skilled workers and these skilled workers have attained a great deal of progress when it comes to the interests of the worker and working families and skills and the type of workplace, why not try to raise those standards to the best that we have rather than trying to bring everybody else down to the lowest common denominator? That's basically, incrementally, what this government wants to do.

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This was a very grassroots meeting that Minister Stockwell attended, and I have to say, to his credit, that he did stay and answer questions at that meeting. Unionized workers—I'm going to say it again—have made a great deal of progress over the last century. They've made a great deal of progress because their representatives and their leaders have fought for better working conditions, better wages and benefits and the security of a good pension and ongoing skill development. That assists, of course, competitiveness, because that's what we require. We require a skilled workforce. I don't think the Harris Tories or Minister Stockwell would disagree with that statement. Instead, what are they trying to do with those standards? They're

trying to lower them. They're trying to lower those high standards that have been achieved for workers. Again—and I'll say it again—to build a better society, the labour minister should be working toward raising those non-union, low wages forward and higher.

What's interesting to note is that food banks are helping larger and larger numbers of working families whose incomes cannot meet the growing cost of living. That's the reality. It's not even people on welfare; it's the working poor. So, let's look at the direction of this legislation. It is not to shape a good society where people in the workforce are entitled to a fair wage—because that's what I believe: everyone is entitled to a fair wage—it's to attack, confront and break the unions and organized workers so that there is no collective strength to fight injustice in the workplace. I believe that's what the real intent here is.

Let's look at the broad picture. With the labour bill, along with bills that have affected health care and education, Harris and the Conservatives go out of their way to confront and fight with teachers, with nurses, skilled and unskilled labour. Their basic argument is that for business to be competitive and services to be more effective, people should earn less, work longer hours—for example, the 60-hour week—and not have organized labour, because associations and unions are bad. It's that simple.

My position is that unions and organized labour, again, have helped workers to develop high levels of skills to get fair wages, benefits, pensions and some security for themselves and their families. That is what sustainable economic development requires. Yes, there are a few instances where union leaders or executives abuse their position, but that's the case in the banking industry, the stock market, the legal profession, business executives across this province, including politicians. But you don't hear Mike Harris and the Conservative members call them "bank bosses" or "market bosses" or "business bosses." The point is that the economic train is not only made up of business people and that we must recognize that the workforce and organized labour is a large component of that economic engine.

I always listen really carefully to the positions taken by Mike Harris and the Conservatives. It seems to me that the real problem that I see, that I have evaluated, is that they have no plan to deal with the real issues of a looming shortage in the general workforce, such as teachers and nurses, the medical profession and skilled labour. So they have to find enemies to fight, and one of the Harris targets for confrontation is the workforce of this province, in every sector it seems to me, and, more pointedly, organized labour.

Unlike good corporate citizens, the current government is a terrible manager. The provincial neo-Conservative/Canadian Alliance mix knows how to ruthlessly cut dollars out of budgets. They know how to pick fights with groups, and they know how to marginalize people. They know how to give tax cuts and get optimum publicity, and they know how to spend

public dollars on partisan ads. But they do not have a plan to fix the numerous crises they have created by their simplistic policies.

It is my opinion, and it is Dalton McGuinty's and the provincial Liberals' opinion, that the Harris government is wrong in passing this type of legislation without public hearings, especially because I believe it is fundamentally flawed. It takes the extended parental leave provision of 52 weeks, which we asked for, and inserts it among nastier proposals such as the 60-hour workweek. I wonder if the minister understands the societal impact of his legislation or, better, if they really care.

The 60-hour workweek was proposed in the name of flexibility. Presently, the number of hours in a workweek is 44. Anything over 44 hours requires overtime pay, and any work over 48 hours requires overtime pay as well as a permit to allow the employer to exceed this maximum. That's what this means. This legislation would replace the current weekly limit—from 48 hours to 60 hours—although time in excess of 48 hours would require employee agreement.

I've explained that because I wanted to come to this point: good businesses, I presume, would not take advantage of their employees and would respect this cap on the workweek. But the reality is that the 48-hour cap is a measure to prevent employers from exploiting their employees. I can assure you that that does take place in the workplace. This optional criterion is of little value in the workplace, because I don't think we've got the same weight of negotiations between an employer and an employee. Employers have the weight of authority behind them, and there is no counterweight that the employees have. Let's remember that if employees refuse the offer to work 60 hours, they might find that their career prospects are not so good.

The other argument is, if a business wishes to extend hours, maybe it will have that person add the hours without hiring somebody else. Again, I believe there is a general negative societal impact on family time. It's apparent to me that the Harris government is disconnected from reality. Single-parent families, two-parent families, working families are already on a just-in-time treadmill. They are just in time to take children to various activities, just in time to get the groceries done, just in time to go to the dentist, the doctor, the orthodontist or music lessons, just in time to get meals. This is with the current workweek. Can you imagine the extra stress of a 60-hour workweek?

There are also health implications that should be looked at. A study produced by StatsCanada talks about the negative health factors. It is a given that fatigue-related industrial accidents and other accidents are caused by this excessive fatigue.

I just want to add, before the member for St Catharines finishes the debate, that the direction Ontario is taking is several steps backwards. The federal government and four provinces have a 40-hour workweek. France has a 35-hour workweek, and other European countries, 35- to 40-hour workweeks. Most

European countries offer four to six weeks of paid vacation, even to the most junior employee. In Ontario, we have a standard of just two weeks. So it is clear that a move to a 60-hour workweek is not the norm for the western world.

As I conclude, I believe this constant anti-labour legislation is really what Bill 147 is all about.

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Mr Bradley: I actually regret I have to speak on a bill of this kind, because it's the third bill in a row where the government has tilted the balance toward the employer and the business sector, as opposed to trying to maintain a balance between both sides. The most effective labour legislation, people on both the management side and the labour side will tell you, is legislation with which both sides are somewhat unhappy and somewhat pleased. In other words, it has that balance.

I remember in my early days in this Legislature, when Mr Davis was the Premier, that when he dealt with labour legislation, by and large he endeavoured to have legislation that was fair to both sides. Yes, there were arguments from time to time, but we had legislation that was fair to both sides. What we're seeing now, with three bills in a row from this government, is a movement toward one side; in other words, the right wing in this case.

Yes, I know there will be applause from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and I know there will be applause from the chamber of commerce and some other employer groups. One would be surprised if they didn't applaud many pieces of legislation that have come forward. But on balance, when you look at the province, we have the most successful labour relations when there's a feeling of fairness on both sides. How do we get to that? I'm going to deal with the procedure as to how you get to that, because the procedure is important as well.

One thing I have noted, and I'm sure the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, who has been here since 1975, two years before I entered this House—I think what we would note is that the legislative committee system simply does not function anywhere near as well as it did at one time. Quite frankly, it functioned best in a minority government situation, because minority government compels responsibility on two sides. Perhaps the better word for government is that it compels responsiveness; that is, responsiveness to the opposition viewpoint and to the general public, because the government rules only with the consent of at least one of the two parties in the Legislature. On the other hand, of the opposition, it requires responsibility, since the opposition has the opportunity to bring the government down and precipitate an election, or to significantly alter bills in a way which would be unfair to the governing party. So what you find in a minority situation, by and large, particularly in the early days of it, is a sense of responsibility and a sense of responsiveness on the corresponding sides.

One place where I think this Legislature could work in a far better fashion is in the committees of the Legislature. Unfortunately, the custom has become—and I attribute it not only to the present administration, although I see it to perhaps a much greater degree today with this administration. It is a very partisan setting. The chief government whip gives orders to the whips of the committees from the governing party that they shall adhere to the government line. When legislation comes before a committee, rather than members debating, for instance, the amendments, or asking questions that would elicit answers the government perhaps wouldn't be happy with, what we have instead is people speaking only along party lines. The opposition, in reaction to the fact that the government will not budge and shows no intention of budging, tends to be more rigid as a result.

There are a lot of things about the American system I don't find particularly attractive to follow, but one aspect of the American system that has some merit is the committee of the House, or the committee of the Senate in their case, and at the state level the state Senate or the state Legislature, because there seems to be more flexibility, less along party lines than perhaps the personal interest of individuals who represent a constituency.

That brings me to this piece of legislation. There are two or perhaps three reasons for having it go to a committee. The best reason is so we can hear all sides. The government, having heard one side or another, one presenter or another, perhaps may make an amendment, may make a change to the legislation, or in the most drastic case, may withdraw the legislation and start again.

Second, it gives an opportunity for people to at least believe they had their day in court. That's important to a lot of people who feel frustrated, that they really haven't been listened to. The kind of consultation the Minister of Labour undertook was a minimal consultation, in my view, one which would not elicit the kind of valuable information that might cause the government to amend or withdraw this legislation.

We can't look upon this bill alone as the government thrust in the field of labour relations. It's three bills in a row that have tilted the balance in favour of the employer as opposed to the employee. I don't think that's healthy in a province. Ultimately that will engender bitterness.

When you have an economy that is booming as the American economy is booming south of the border at the present time, and with Ontario being a major exporting province, very reliant on exports to the United States, we would expect that Ontario's, and indeed Canada's, economy would be booming as a result of that booming American economy.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): Jim, you were against free trade.

Mr Bradley: I could get into another debate on the issue of free trade. I've been reading about some people who were initially in favour of free trade who now see some problems there.

I simply point out how dependent we are on the American market at this time, as opposed to a multi-

plicity of markets or our own market, so that you don't take full credit for the economic condition of Ontario. I know that Premier Harris and his cabinet are as large as life taking credit for things that go well, and can be found nowhere when there is responsibility to be taken for difficult situations. At those times they point to the federal government, to the previous Liberal government, to the previous NDP government or to the media. The other day the Premier was saying that it was the world's fault, that it was a worldwide problem with nurses.

This was the Premier who said that the nurses, like Hula Hoop workers, would simply have to change their profession. This was back when he was ensuring that about 15,000 nurses in this province were fired out the door as he was closing hospitals, having said, as members of the Legislature will recall, in May 1995, "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals."

I might say to you, Mr Speaker, because you've been interested in this specific issue, that in the city of St Catharines despite all promises to the contrary we have the Hotel Dieu Hospital now looking somewhat like a glorified walk-in clinic, when this government's commissions get through with it, because it will not be a full hospital. But I do not want to digress at this point.

The Minister of Health is here today. She would hear that. I'm looking forward with anticipation to what she refers to as an external look or examination of the ambulance dispatch system in the Niagara region, and I look forward to her movement, I hope, in the field of ophthalmology for the Niagara region.

But I want to deal with this bill at this time and say that I find it a major step backward to have this 60-hour threshold. I happen to believe that people, particularly when economic times become more difficult or people are more desperate, are going to be coerced by some employers, not all, to work much longer, many more hours, than would have been the case without this legislation. At least with the permit system an application was made and the government had the opportunity, having heard the case of both sides, to either approve or deny the permit for additional overtime work. In this case, I think we will see it become much more the norm than the exception.

2100

We notice the term "voluntary" used in this legislation, but I think we must recognize that if people are looking for advancement in the workplace, if they're looking for promotion in the workplace, if they're sometimes looking for the number of hours or the opportunities to work at the best of times, they may find those denied unless they're prepared to co-operate with the employer in regard to overtime. So I'm concerned about that provision.

There are some parts of the bill that are certainly acceptable to those of us on this side of the House. The government has followed the lead, as it does on so many occasions, of the federal government, in this case in terms of legislation that I think most people consider to

be progressive. That is something we must compliment the government for. I don't want to be negative on all occasions, but I think we recognize there are too many provisions in this bill, hostages as I call them, to make it attractive for those of us in the opposition to vote for it.

We look at overtime. That's a problem with the government proposal. Overtime pay should not be averaged, quite obviously, over several weeks because employees are going to lose out on valuable pay for their work. Second, as the 60-hour maximum can be spread out unevenly over three weeks, a worker's schedule will be sporadic and detrimental to their day-to-day lives. I think people like to have some determination as to when and how they're going to be working, and this allows for that to be disrupted considerably.

In terms of vacation time, the daily vacation time does nothing to improve the health or productivity of a worker who needs downtime from the job. This proposal erodes the time that employees look forward to spend with children, for instance, in the summer when they're out of school, and complete breaks from the workforce are often needed to rejuvenate workers.

The minister mentioned that some people may choose this option. I think there's a fear that others might well be compelled in one way or another to take vacations one day at a time instead of over a period of two or three weeks, which may be more useful to them.

The maternity-paternity leave provision is one with which both opposition parties agree. It's unfortunate that aspect wasn't taken out of the bill and put in a separate bill. I would have thought that bill, that provision, would have gone through—I think the member for Hamilton West would agree with me—probably in a day, because there would not be a difference of opinion in this House. That's a part of the bill I want to speak in favour of. As I like to be from time to time, I want to be fair to the government and say that's a positive provision of this legislation.

The emergency crisis leave: well, it's a start. It isn't exactly what we thought should happen, but it is a start, 10 days of annual leave when warranted for family emergencies, because there are family emergencies. What we think would be good to build into legislation is an opportunity—the Minister of Health, who is here this evening, would know this as well as anyone because of her specific responsibilities. There are times when up to 12 weeks of medical leave might be useful, particularly when a person is in a terminal situation, and obviously a terminal situation of someone in the family.

If you look at the demographics we're moving into today, most families are smaller in number than they were in the past, so the number of children there are to look after parents as they get into advanced age and are perhaps suffering from serious illness is a smaller number. You're seeing one and a half or two or two and a half children in a family where you might have seen four and five children in a family before.

What I'm concerned about is that we have a bill which does contain some positive aspects to it, but held hostage

in it is the overtime provision. What is hostage here is the potential 60-hour workweek. It certainly fits with Bill 139, which again had some negative aspects for the trade union movement, and Bill 69. All of these were of particular concern. Again, when I look at fairness and balance in the previous legislation—and others have mentioned this, and they quoted Bill Murdoch, the member for Bruce-Grey, in this—there is a provision where you will post in the workplace how you decertify a union, but you don't post how a union may be accepted, how you certify a union. If you had balance, you'd have both in there. If you think it's important that one is there, I think it's important to have the other.

That's what governing is all about. It's about trying to develop a consensus. It's not always possible to do, but you try to develop that consensus, you try to keep labour peace in the province. My view is that this legislation, coupled with the two other pieces of legislation, will not do that; in fact, it will do exactly the opposite. It is going to be somewhat detrimental to those who are in the workforce today.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Christopherson: I want to compliment all three of my Liberal colleagues for their analysis of this bill. I think they've pointed out a number of deficiencies. Certainly at least one of them made reference to the fact that this is not a bill that helps working people at all.

I'd like to expand on that point—and I made it earlier—about the minimum wage. I want to read from an editorial in a paper called the Daily News out of New York, New York. It was given to me by my colleague from Toronto-Danforth, Marilyn Churley. It's dated September 4, 2000. The headline, first of all, is: "Go to the Max for Minimum Wage." It says, "There is no valid argument against an increase. When the feds last increased the minimum wage by 90 cents in 1996,"—90 cents, I would point out parenthetically, in 1996; we haven't seen a raise in the minimum wage in Ontario since 1995, and that was under the NDP government, and this is one of two increases they've had, and it was 90 cents US in 1996—"the move was greeted with dire predictions, including that it would spur unemployment. Instead, unemployment has dropped.

"A higher minimum wage moves the economy toward higher overall pay and higher productivity. Everyone, workers and bosses, benefits from that."

Let me just say that the minister pointed out that under our time in government there had been a 37% increase in the minimum wage. First of all, I'm proud of that. I don't feel I have to defend it. I'm proud of it. Secondly, I would say that had nothing to do with dampening the benefit that companies and corporations made in terms of their profits in the boom times of 1995 to 2000. In fact, the business education tax has done a lot more damage to businesses in Hamilton than minimum wage every would.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to make a few comments tonight. I'd like to thank my Liberal colleagues from Sarnia-Lambton, St Catharines

and Hamilton East for their comments. I'd like to point out a couple of things. I had a few concerns, a few contacts and phone calls, e-mails, etc before the 50-week maternity package was put together. People were very concerned about that, and I was very happy that this was included in this particular piece of legislation.

I hear the comments coming from the members opposite, and I'm really concerned about their thoughts on how damaging the 60-hour workweek is. I have a number of constituents and friends who are both employees and employers, particularly in the construction trades, and the biggest problem they're having by far right now is finding help. Up in our region of Ontario at least, the Barrie and Simcoe county area of Ontario, we have a high number of construction building permits for all sectors of the economy, and even a lot of the agricultural areas are expanding, some farms and that sort of thing.

In a lot of cases, the employers are actually giving out additional incentives to try to keep their employees around. For example, they'll often supply them with a vehicle. A lot of people have trouble with two people working in the family, and if a second vehicle is a problem, they'll give them a truck, etc. I see a lot of incentives from employers to the employees, and I don't think you've looked at that sector or that part of the legislation at all or that part of what's happening in the economy.

2110

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

I want to commend my colleagues, Mr Bradley, Mr Agostino and Ms Di Cocco for their comments with respect to Bill 147. I have listened to the debate for most of the evening, and I want to say that I think the members of my caucus have indicated that while the bill does contain some measures, particularly the maternity and paternity leave provisions, which are acceptable and supportable, it unfortunately contains some other matters that give us great pause and cause some very real concern to working men and women that we represent.

In my part of eastern Ontario, I have had submissions as recently as today from people who are very concerned about the overtime provisions and about the 60-hour week. Let's not kid ourselves. As my friend Mr Bradley observed, the Employment Standards Act is the piece of legislation that regulates the non-unionized workforce. These provisions, made to sound so reasonable by our friend Mr Stockwell, the Minister of Labour, definitely tilt the balance. There can be no member of this Legislature who would honestly believe that an employer is not going to want to take every advantage of the overtime provision to pay as little of it as possible. It's all about nuance. It's all about tilting the playing field. If we have a collective agreement, obviously I'm less concerned. But most of the people who are going to be affected by these provisions are unorganized, and they are going to be very much under the thumb of the employer.

I just think that any of us who have ever worked in a workplace—and believe it or not, I did myself once upon a time. I can easily understand how this opportunity for the 60-hour week and the opportunity to average overtime is certainly not, in most cases, going to work to the advantage of unorganized working men and women.

Mr Maves: It's a pleasure to rise and comment on the comments of the members from the Liberal Party, specifically the member from Sarnia-Lambton. I took in some of her comments backstage on the television. It strikes me that in the past four years, in the first four years of our mandate from 1995 to 1999, we passed several pieces of labour legislation. I remember quite clearly the last piece of construction labour legislation that we passed, and I remember at the time the NDP and the opposition party telling us that it was going to stop all construction from occurring in the province and there were going to be province-wide strikes and why did we want to do this to the economy. I remember protests up in the gallery from some of those construction unions, not unlike the small one we had tonight, again saying, "The sky will fall, and all the prosperity that we've built up over the past five years will end, and you'll never build another commercial project in the province of Ontario." None of that has happened over the past four years.

In fact, as we know, the opposite has happened. Over 800,000 more people are employed today in Ontario than were employed in 1995. After-tax incomes have gone up dramatically in the past four years. Under this government, private sector wage hikes have now started to exceed those in the public sector, which was totally opposite of the way things were when the Liberals and the NDP were in office. Dramatically more people are working. More people are better off.

I would say again to the member from Sarnia-Lambton and some of the other members that when this piece of legislation is passed—and even members of the labour movement whom I've talked to have conceded this in some of the construction legislation, like Bill 69, which we recently passed—it will actually probably enhance the workplace in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Bradley: I thank the members from Hamilton West, Simcoe North, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Niagara Falls for their contributions, their comments and their questions. I wish to reiterate in my windup remarks, on behalf of my colleagues, a great concern that this legislation is moving far too quickly through the Legislature without the kind of hearings that I think are important.

I would want to hear both from employers and employees, and I'd perhaps want to hear from those who in the academic world have made a study of labour legislation and could give us some advice. It is important as well to have it from people who are in the unorganized workplace and the organized workplace. That's where you bring about the balance in legislation. When you have three pieces of legislation in a row which tilt the balance toward the employer, you can certainly

understand the concern of members of the trade union movement and indeed of workers who are not unionized that they are not going to be in a better position.

The member for Simcoe North mentioned that when there is an economy where workers are sought, there are incentives given; there are some additional benefits that are given. I remind him that the economy will not always be that way. The concern of many is that if there's a downturn in the economy at all, if it levels off at all, that is the time—and particularly in tough economic times—when they may be compelled to work overtime when they don't want to work overtime and to lose some of those overtime benefits because of the averaging which is built into this legislation.

So I think it's important that you have those hearings. I think it's important that you modify that legislation. I think it's important that members of the governing caucus strive to have that balance for which the Progressive Conservative Party in years gone by was noted. One of the reasons they were in power for 42 years was that they recognized that balance and the need to develop a consensus. I only hope the government would do that in further labour legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: We have about 11 minutes on the clock. Obviously I will open my leadoff remarks this evening and continue tomorrow afternoon sometime shortly after question period.

Let me say at the outset that an important part of all this is the suggestion by the government that anyone who would dare vote against this obviously doesn't support the extended parental leave provisions in Bill 147. The official opposition has said that they thought this could be passed in a day. Let me say that as long as we've got unanimous consent, we can do it in half a day. I am making it very clear on behalf of our caucus that if you want to unbundle this, split the bill, call it what you will but put that particular bill on the floor tomorrow, by the end of the day it can be law. We have absolutely no desire to slow that down.

I think you insult the Ontario people by suggesting that this bill has to be rammed through without detailed scrutiny because this particular law needs to be in place by January 1, 2001, in order to benefit from the changes to the federal legislation. That doesn't hold. You've heard it from the official opposition; you're hearing it from me. I also happen to be the House leader for our caucus. I'm saying to you that if you pull that out of this bill and put it in the Legislature and it is as straightforward as it needs to be—I believe the bill of my colleague the member from Nickel Belt, Shelley Martel, was one or two lines; that's all that needs to be done—you have an absolute guarantee that it will be through here. Please don't use that as an excuse for not taking the time that a bill like this deserves.

2120

In response to the Minister of Labour's comments, I was somewhat disappointed where he talked about the briefing. I know he didn't hit it hard, but he clearly was

trying to leave the impression that because the two critics from the Liberal and NDP caucuses weren't present at these briefings, maybe we don't care quite as much about this as we would like people to believe. Look, the fact of the matter is—and people are probably surprised to know this—we are informed of those briefings sometimes as little as an hour before they're tabled on the floor of the Legislature. And guess what? We are all pretty busy. The notion that any one of us, on the government side or the opposition, could suddenly change their schedule in a snap, within an hour, is ludicrous. I had staff there; I'm sure the official opposition had staff there. Bearing in mind that we already had two other major pieces of labour legislation in front of this House simultaneously, I think that more than knocks down any implications the minister might want to leave about our personal attention at these briefings.

I want to spend my remaining eight minutes this evening to begin to talk about—I'll probably have to conclude that tomorrow—this business of public hearings versus the consultation that the minister held. To his credit, he did issue a white paper. To his credit, he did travel around the province and invite people to make comments on the white paper. But there is a world of difference between inviting someone to come into a meeting that is controlled by the minister and his or her staff to comment on a discussion paper about what you might do or might not do and what people think about it versus proper legislative hearings.

Let's remember that this is not just a few amendments. This is a brand new bill, from front to back. The Employment Standards Act in the province of Ontario has been rewritten from front to back. I've been scrambling trying to get copies of legal analysis of this bill. You should know the reason I'm having trouble is not because people don't want to share it with me; they're quite prepared to do that. They haven't had the time. These are law firms that specialize in employment legislation, employment law, and they haven't been able to conclude the analysis. Here we are already one third through probably all of the debate we are going to get on this, certainly on second reading, because we know time allocation is coming.

It doesn't just replace the Employment Standards Act; it replaces five pieces of legislation. Let me remind the government members who are here this evening that if this bill is rammed through without public hearings, that means the two pillars of labour law in the province of Ontario, the Ontario Labour Relations Act and the Employment Standards Act, will both have been rewritten front to back, completely new laws, and neither one of them will have had one minute of public hearings. So the two pillars of labour legislation in Ontario will have had absolutely no input from anybody watching this or reading the Hansard.

What's the difference between holding public hearings in a legislative committee versus the consultation? I've already pointed out that one is the method or the vehicle of conveying the message, which is a white paper, which

is just discussion, and that the minister controls the entire environment; it's his meeting. A legislative committee is a meeting of this Legislature. Yes, the government has the majority, they have control at the end of the day, but we do have some rights in there on the opposition benches. We have the right to ask questions of experts. Whether they're pro or con on the bill, we at least have the right to probe further and ask questions. We have a right to invite experts who may have a different point of view than the individuals or the groups that you might want to invite. Yes, sometimes they're repetitive. Sometimes the labour council message is similar in Chatham to what it is in Hamilton, Toronto and Sudbury, but guess what? So is the chamber of commerce. Those communities are entitled to have their say. They are entitled to have their own local media there. They are entitled to see members of the Legislature dealing with laws that affect their very quality of life. People in Ontario are entitled to that.

I'll give you another point. All of the consultations, to the best of my knowledge—and I would ask the minister or the parliamentary assistant to correct me if I'm wrong—were conducted in English. Parliamentary legislative committees are in both official languages. I realize that's not like the end of the world to a lot of people, but that's the law of this country and it's the law of this province. Those are rights that francophones are being denied, not to mention the fact that Hansard is available at committee. We don't know what was said. I know what was said at the one meeting I went to in Ottawa when I presented to the minister, and I did. But that's a lot different than the speech I'm going to give here tonight. Why? Because I have the law in front of me versus just what the minister was musing about doing. I have no way of knowing what was said before I went to that meeting. I have no way of knowing what was said in other communities. When it's in front of a legislative committee and it's in the Amethyst Room it's on TV, but at the very least there's Hansard. It's all there for people to look at, to study, to analyze and to make their own decision about how they feel about this legislation and how each of us votes on that legislation—worlds of difference, absolute worlds of difference.

Let me give an example. We probably, given the limited time of debate here, won't get to this other than

my own reference to it, but I think this clause alone deserves at least a little bit of scrutiny. Part VII, under "Hours of Work and Eating Periods," subsections 17(3) and (4): subsection (3) says, "An employee may revoke an agreement under subsection (2)"—that's the 60 hours, the agreement that you give to voluntarily enter into this agreement with your employer—"two weeks after giving written notice to the employer." You have to give written notice that you agree to work up to 60 hours. This clause, subsection (3), says that the employee, to get out of that written commitment, needs to give two weeks' notice. The very next clause, subsection (4), says, "An employer may revoke an agreement under subsection (2) after giving reasonable notice to the employee." One is two weeks; the other is reasonable notice.

It may be that there is a good reason for that. I know that some of the arguments will be the demands of business, the demands of productivity, and maybe there are some emergency clauses. I don't know. Again, without benefit of having an employer come in, an expert in the field, and explain why they like that in there, I have no way of knowing what the rationale is. I can't even ask the minister. This forum doesn't allow that. But I'm willing to bet that there's an equal argument—and I'd be one of the ones making it—that if it's good for the goose it's good for the gander. If it's reasonable notice one way, then ought it not be reasonable notice the other, or should there be a compromise somewhere in between, or should there be two weeks for both? Who knows? But my point is to argue that the consultation the minister had is equivalent to holding legislative public hearings on a bill that affects so many millions of people. To me, there is one example alone that justifies why the people of Ontario are entitled and deserve to have us roll up our sleeves and go through this massive document clause-by-clause and understand it, and give people a voice and give them a chance to have a say.

I see you shifting in your chair, Speaker, so I will end now and pick up my debate tomorrow.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2129.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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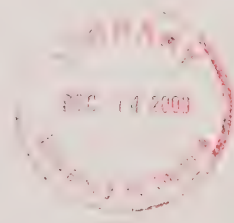
Mercredi 6 décembre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 décembre 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I'm here to respond in a way to the Minister of Community and Social Services, who yesterday took it upon himself to threaten members of this side of the Legislature with sanctions for having protested some of his actions. What I want to do instead is draw attention to this Legislature and to pledge, I'm sure on behalf of other members of this Legislature, perhaps not restricted to this side, that we will not be intimidated by the Minister of Community and Social Services to talk to him about the dereliction of duty that's taking place on the part of this government.

Specifically, I want to talk about the increase in deprivation that's taking place in this province on this government's watch. We have a member opposite who's grinning. I think for this government to divorce itself from its fundamental responsibility—of all the things it does, making sure that children, that families, that seniors have enough to eat and live in some state of dignity in this province should be prime among them. Instead we have a government that has abdicated, a government that has put in the way of people more barriers rather than fewer.

Last month, 118,986 children used food banks in this province. They used food banks in a time of unprecedented prosperity because they can't have the focus of this government that has allowed rents to increase by 25%, that has seen food prices go up by 15%, that has seen other things like transit go up far ahead of inflation, and not one single cent from this government for the poorest people in this province, who will, by dint of their own ingenuity, find a way. But the deprivation, the suffering they go through is put upon them and it is deepened by the ignorance of a minister who won't do his job.

TRANSALTA COGENERATING FACILITY

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): The lead article in the November 4 Sarnia Observer reads as follows: "Energy Plant Welcomed." On November 3,

I, along with Ministers Newman and Wilson, had the honour to assist in the groundbreaking ceremonies for the TransAlta cogenerating facility. This is a \$400-million investment. The facility will produce 440 megawatts of power when fully operational in October 2002. That is enough power to supply a city of 350,000 people. Over the next 18 months there will be 400 construction jobs created, which will result in 20 to 30 permanent jobs once the project is completed.

Equally important is the fact that this plant will burn natural gas. Emissions will be reduced by 60% on a per-kilowatt basis through improved fuel usage and equipment upgrades.

This is a win-win situation. It's good for the local economy but it's also very friendly to the air we breathe in the area.

I quote from a September 16, 2000, editorial in the Sarnia Observer:

"The controversial project agreement may have been a bitter pill for local construction unions to swallow last year, but it should seem a little sweeter now...."

"The project agreement between unions and contractors was designed to encourage new construction in the valley after concerns were raised over local construction costs...."

"With Thursday's announcement, it's clear that strategy is having a positive impact on the community."

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I want to express my opposition to the Harris government's sudden decision to break up and sell off most of the businesses associated with the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. The last we heard from the Minister of Northern Development and Mines was that he ordered the ONTC to make recommendations on how to improve rail passenger service in the northeast. Now northeastern Ontario is reeling from the sudden announcement that all the components of the ONTC are up for sale, save for the bus service.

We, the residents of northeastern Ontario, are the shareholders of the ONTC and we should have a say concerning its future. The ONTC has been providing passenger and freight rail service, bus service, telecommunications, ferry service to Manitoulin Island, for decades. It is this government agency that opened up

northeastern Ontario with its railway and telecommunications systems.

In the past six years, the Harris government has created this crisis, as in so many other things, by starving this organization of the cash it so desperately needs to deliver these important services to Ontarians. We need to immediately see the consultant's report that concluded this breakup was the only answer. Then, in the new year, we need a series of public meetings in each of the towns along the rail corridor to give the people an opportunity for input as to how their transportation company should be managed.

Again Mike Harris has betrayed the trust of northern Ontarians by this arbitrary decision. Again Mike Harris has abandoned northern Ontario.

RÉNO DÉPÔT

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): The construction and home improvement market in Ontario is worth more than \$6 billion, and it's still growing. It is valued at more than \$17.2 billion across Canada.

Last Wednesday I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the Building Box, a new home improvement warehouse store in Scarborough Centre. A few hours later a second location was opened in Cambridge. An additional 13 stores are slated to open across Ontario in the next three years. The Scarborough and Cambridge stores are the first phase of a \$350-million investment in Ontario by Réno Dépôt, a Quebec-based subsidiary of the Groupe Castorama of France. The group is the world's third-largest home improvement retailer, with 503 stores in 11 countries.

The Scarborough store represents an investment of over \$23 million in Scarborough Centre. Hundreds of construction jobs were produced during construction of the facility, and more than 300 new, permanent jobs have been created in the community. I welcome Réno Dépôt's investment in Scarborough Centre's people and their faith in Ontario's booming economy. I wish them well in their future investments in the province.

Please join me in congratulating the company on its expansion into Ontario and in welcoming the president and CEO of Réno Dépôt, Mr Yves Archambault, to the Legislature.

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION LAYOFFS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): As the Whig Standard reported today, "A big bag of coal was delivered to about 150 Ministry of Transportation employees in Kingston yesterday when the government announced that their jobs will be lost to the private sector."

As the privatization bulldozer moves on, it is well to recall the words of David Turnbull, Minister of Transportation, when he stated at the introduction of Bill 137 that it was the intent of the bill only to transfer driver

examination services to the private sector. In the Kingston MTO office, that affects 20 of the 150 jobs lost to the private sector. What we have said all along is that Bill 137 is not just about transferring driver testing, but it has also affected many other jobs as well in the Ministry of Transportation, such as data and records management and other driver and vehicle services.

With all the problems the government is having in privatizing much-needed government services, especially just recently in the area of correctional services where a minister has resigned over alleged offences committed related to the Young Offenders Act, I implore the government to stop its reckless privatization of good government services. They are done for one purpose and one purpose only, and that is to drive the wages of public sector employees lower. Instead the government should boost the morale of all those public servants, whether it's in the public service or in the broader public service in such vital areas such as teaching and the nursing profession.

I implore this government to stop its wanton destruction of our public institutions and instead boost the morale of the men and women who continue to serve the Ontario public in such an exemplary fashion.

1340

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): November 30, 2000: that was the day the Ministry of Health was supposed to make concrete recommendations to the Minister of Health to solve the doctor specialist shortage in our community. November 30 has come and gone and we have heard nothing from the Minister of Health about this crisis or how the government will solve it. We do know that the crisis has gotten worse in recent months, and the silence from the government on this important issue is just not acceptable.

At a meeting on May 17 at the Sudbury Regional Hospital, the chief of staff and the then-chief of nursing told government officials how bad the situation was then. Since January 1999, our community had lost 15 doctors and specialists, including our only full-time thoracic surgeon and our only hospital-based neurologist. Further, 22 family doctors had withdrawn their hospital privileges due to a heavy workload, leaving 30% of Sudbury's population as orphaned patients when admitted to hospital.

Government officials said they understood these problems and promised to bring recommendations to the Minister of Health by November 30 to solve them. Now, six months later, the crisis has deepened. There are now 14 full-time emergency physicians when we need 20. The present group is overwhelmed every day, and too many patients are still orphans when admitted to hospital. One specialist in each of obstetrics, general surgery, oncology, paediatrics and orthopaedics has left since May. There is still no thoracic surgeon and no hospital-based neurologist. Our shortage of specialists is 30% worse

than the provincial average and we have 20,000 people without a family doctor.

November 30 has come and gone. Where are the recommendations?

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

Mr David Young (Willowdale): A short time ago, I attended the "Heart of Fashion ... Shop for the Cure" charity gala at the Bayview Village shopping centre. The proceeds from this very unique fundraiser, which featured festive shopping, wine tasting and a silent auction, will support the Canadian Cancer Society's breast cancer research program. The Canadian Cancer Society does wonderful work to assist people living with cancer and supports our medical researchers in search of a cure.

Cancer is a deeply personal illness for all of us. We have all been touched by this devastating illness, whether it is a personal struggle or the struggle of a neighbour or a cherished loved one. The challenge we as a community face in dealing with cancer is enormous, but every challenge must be met by a dream.

This disease demands that we fight, that we muster all possible courage to successfully defeat it. The support of the Canadian Cancer Society makes it a little bit easier for individuals and their families to fight this disease. The society and its volunteers provide hope that we will one day eradicate cancer. Their work involves every community across this country. On behalf of the residents of Willowdale, I want to thank the Canadian Cancer Society and its volunteers for all that they do and all the hope they provide.

ST FRANCIS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I am absolutely delighted to rise in my place today as the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to pay tribute to the staff and volunteers at St Francis Memorial Hospital in Barry's Bay, one of the very best community hospitals not just in Ontario but across Canada, on the occasion of their 40th anniversary.

I well remember the day 40 years ago this fall when Premier Leslie M. Frost walked into that beautiful new facility. I was in grade 4, and we got the afternoon off school. He opened a wonderful health care facility in the heart of the Madawaska Valley. The vision of Monsignor Peter Biernacki of Barry's Bay had finally been realized. I want to say to the current board, ably chaired by John Sorensen, and to the present auxiliary, ably led by Ms Lorraine Finn, that they have carried on the great tradition of that hospital. The Sisters of St Joseph in Pembroke were responsible for the leadership of that hospital in terms of a professional nursing staff in the first 15 years, and they have been succeeded in the last 15 to 25 years by largely a lay staff.

I want to say to the volunteers, people like Theresa Beanish and Agnes Pecarskie, those wonderful people, mostly female, who worked so hard to raise the money to

keep that facility in the tradition of excellence it has become, may their next 40 years be as successful as their first 40 years.

NURSING STAFF

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): Recently the opposition has been making boisterous accusations toward the Minister of Health, indicating that this government has fired thousands of nurses and refuses to acknowledge the urgent need for more nurses in our hospitals. They claim that none of the hospitals in the province are able to hire nurses.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the House that at least for York Central Hospital, which serves the constituents of Thornhill, this is far from the case. York Central Hospital recently received funding of \$11.6 million, to be used to address costs associated with providing patient care. Just last Friday, York Central received an extra \$2.2 million for high-priority health services, including dialysis, orthopaedic implants and level 2 neonatal care.

With the help of this new funding, York Central Hospital has been able to increase its registered nursing staff complement both last year and this year: in the year 1999-2000, an increase of 60 full-time equivalents; and for the current year, York Central has increased its nursing staff complement by 87 FTEs. This trend most definitely dispels the myth reiterated constantly by the opposition that hospitals are not hiring nurses.

These additional FTEs represent 28% of the hospital's total required 1,109 FTEs, as outlined in this year's current operating plan. Should other nursing staff be included, such as registered practical nurses and other nursing assistants, 41% of the total new FTEs would be in the nursing field.

York Central Hospital provides high-quality care to my constituents, and this includes increasing staff to provide the quality services.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Before we proceed, we have in the members' west gallery Mr Hugh O'Neil, the member for Quinte in the 32nd, 33rd, 34th and 35th Parliaments. I'm sure all members join in welcoming our honoured friend.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND SOCIAL POLICY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice and social policy and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 139, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: Will the members kindly take their seats.

Mrs Mushinski has moved adoption of the report from the standing committee on justice and social policy on Bill 139.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Snobelen, John
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Spina, Joseph
Beaubien, Marcel	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Clark, Brad	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Clement, Tony	Mariand, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Coburn, Brian	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Cunningham, Dianne	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Young, David
Harris, Michael D.	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte
Bartolucci, Rick	Cordiano, Joseph	Levac, David
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin	Marchese, Rosario
Bountrogianni, Marie	Di Cocco, Caroline	Martel, Shelley
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard
Brown, Michael A.	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Kormos, Peter	Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 47; the nays are 33.

The Speaker: The adoption of the report is carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Wednesday, November 22, 2000, the bill is ordered for third reading.

WEARING OF RIBBONS AND PINS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for all

members of this Legislature to wear the white ribbon, a symbol of men against violence against women.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Speaker: Because of the rules of the Legislature, I also ask unanimous consent for members to be able to wear the rose pin today to remember the December 6 massacre.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

VISITORS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): On a point of order, Speaker: the Dairy Farmers of Ontario are in the members' gallery. I would ask all members to join me in welcoming them to the Legislature.

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent that each party be given five minutes in order to make statements surrounding the anniversary of the Montreal massacre, and at the end of those statements I would ask you to call for a moment of silence to remember the women who died so tragically in this event.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): Today marks the annual national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Because of the terrible events that occurred in 1989, December 6 has become a date that's engraved in the minds of Canadians and Ontarians. Fourteen young women were murdered at l'École polytechnique in what is now known as the Montreal massacre, an event that has affected the country deeply. It was an act that ended the lives of these women simply because they were women. We can't help but wonder where these women, these 14 who meant so much to their families, their friends, their communities, would be in their lives today had they survived. Where would they be in their careers now? Would they be realizing their dreams? Would they have daughters of their own? We will never know the answers to this, and that sad silence is part of the profound grief that revolves around this tragedy.

December 6 is now a day of reflection across the country. People take time to commemorate the 14 Montreal women that we all lost, and we take time to reflect on the issue of violence against women.

1400

Sadly, it is estimated that in Canada over the last 10 years an average of two women a week have been killed at the hands of their partners or ex-partners—two women

every single week. Here in Ontario, this past year has been marked by a number of cases of women who have been seriously assaulted or even killed by their current or former spouses.

When we remember the 14 women who lost their lives in Montreal, we must remember all the women who are affected by violence, all the women who have died because of their gender, all the women who live in fear of violence in all its forms each day of their lives.

This is not a crime that happens somewhere else; it is a crime that happens in our own country, in our own province, in our own city, in our own community. It's a crime that has to stop.

It is important to acknowledge, on this day of remembrance, that the last 11 years have brought a new awareness in our society about violence against women and about women's right to live in safety. This government is committed to ensuring a woman's right to safety. This government is committed to assisting women and their children to live free from all forms of violence.

What we need is a society that continues to work for change, a society that continues to work for women, a society that continues to honour the 14 women who were slain. In honour of all women whose lives have been affected by this violence, we must remember.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I rise in memory of the 14 women who were massacred 11 years ago and of the other hundreds and thousands of women who have died alone in their homes, for whom there is no national day of mourning.

Today in Canada we mark the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Let us reflect for one moment on what the years have meant since this most horrific day 11 years ago. Violence against women still exists. We have been fighting for changes in this Legislature, and since September on a specific action plan, but to no avail. For the past 11 years, the activists have been trying to raise this issue in the consciousness of the public, the media and the government. With great fortitude, they have persevered, even as governments have ignored and confused the issues.

I also want to make mention of the women who have escaped their abusers. For it is a testament to their own strength of spirit and fortitude that they have been able to escape this violence. They often leave without any supports in place to provide for their children and themselves. Yet they risk leaving in the hope of providing a better life for their children, free of violence.

Women represent half our population. We do ourselves a disservice when we ignore the plight of so many. Violence against women is an epidemic of shameful proportions. By averting our eyes from its existence, we ourselves become complicit in its perpetuation.

The Montreal massacre was not simply the work of a madman. It was the work of someone who blamed those innocent women for his own failure to succeed. He blamed women for preventing him from attaining what he thought was rightly his. It is this ignorance, this belief, that enables violence against women to continue. By

failing to understand that all people are equal, some individuals are able to project their anger, their dissatisfaction with life upon the women in their lives. This is wrong. Violence against women is not normal, it is not OK and it cannot be rationalized.

It is only when a paradigm shift occurs in our understanding of the principle of the equality of men and women that we will be able to eradicate violence against women. This change of attitude and perception must begin at home. For the change to occur, we must first educate our citizens, and for this, we here in this government bear responsibility. This government's cutbacks in education have affected essential programs in our schools. If we are not educating our young on the equality of women and men, on how to recognize abusers, on how to manage anger and address frustration, then we are failing in our duty to raise future generations.

Today we still struggle for equal female representation in our science-based programs. Programs like engineering still fight for female enrolment. At the time of the Montreal massacre, only 13% of the engineering students were female. Today it sits at 19%. This is still not enough. My husband's department of civil engineering at McMaster doesn't have one female engineering professor, and out of eight graduate students only one is a woman.

The 14 women who lost their lives at L'École polytechnique represented a brain trust that is lost to us forever. These women had fought against the mould, had fought the stigma and the stereotypes aligned against them. There are many who will never be able to imagine being lined up and shot because of their gender. But this is what happened 11 years ago. They are dead for one reason and one reason only: they were women. This is something we can never forget.

Let us reinstate funding for women's shelters, for crisis lines, for second-stage housing, for pay equity, for all the most important front-line services that provide the assistance and the stepping stones to enable women to leave their abusers.

But let us, first and foremost, look inside ourselves as a government here in Ontario, as a society, as a community and as individuals and reaffirm our commitment to the principle of equality between men and women.

We need to prevent violence against women, not react after the fact. We need to educate our children about the need to create a society where all people are equal. We need a comprehensive educational program to teach our students how to manage their anger, how to respond in peaceful ways to the stresses in our society and how to recognize the danger signs of anger and abuse.

Today is a day of remembrance. Let us remember the sacrifice that has been made. Let us remember the bright lights that were extinguished in Montreal on this day 11 years ago and all those other women who have died alone since, and let them not have died in vain.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On Wednesday, December 6, 1989, a 25-year-old man entered the University of Montreal's school of engineering building.

He was carrying a semi-automatic rifle. It was a little after 5 pm when he walked into the classroom, shouting, "I want the women." He separated the men from the women, ordered the men to leave and lined the women up along an execution wall. "You are all feminists," he yelled, and began shooting to kill.

By the end of his rampage, he had murdered 14 women and injured 13 others—mostly women. Eleven years later, the anger is still there. We mark this tragic anniversary by remembering the 14 women who were killed, who were executed that day.

Today I will once again, as we all will, think of these young vibrant women, bubbling with energy and promise. I'm thinking of their parents, their families. What a terrible day this must be for them. I will think of the grief and pain that is the legacy of the Montreal massacre.

And I think of all the women who have been murdered, battered and terrorized by their spouses and lovers. I am thinking of how much I want, as I hope we all do, the lives of my daughter and our daughters to be free of sexual harassment, to be free of fear and violence. Yet hope presents a far different picture than reality. Think of last summer in Ontario, a summer of horrific, graphic violence against women, where men brutally tracked down their wives and former partners, murdering the women and sometimes their children.

Our work is far from done. The horror is far from over. Every few weeks this fall, the Legislature has been visited by a growing coalition of strong and committed women who have responded to last summer's murders with a growing resolve to treat violence against women as the crisis it is. This coalition of women has presented this Legislature with a set of well-thought-out measures, emergency measures, to help put an end to the violence that keeps women and children locked in chains of fear.

On a day such as this, where warm words and sad thoughts accompany our tribute to the 14 women who died in the Montreal massacre, the actions of governments stand in stark contrast. The government says it is a difference of opinion on how to deal with this issue. With due respect, this is not a difference of opinion. It is ignorance, and ignorance is tolerance. Please listen to the victims of violence and the front-line workers. Listen to what they are telling you. We must not be complicit with this inaction. We must act now and we must act decisively. First mourn, then work for change. Eleven years later we are still mourning, but we are still working for change.

1410

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Today I encourage all men to remember the lives of the 14 women killed in the Montreal massacre with a simple white ribbon, which is a symbol of the need for men to break the silence, to end men's violence. As men, we owe it to all women and children and to ourselves to confront men's violence, to work toward full equality for women and to redefine what it means to be men, to discover a meaning to manhood that doesn't require

violent behaviour or displays of power over women. To that end, today we remember and we dedicate ourselves to change.

The Speaker: I would ask all members and our friends in the gallery to join us in a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

MINISTRIES' WEB SITES

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: Earlier today I wrote you, pursuant to standing order 21(c), with respect to government Web sites. You'll recall, sir, that yesterday I raised the question of the Ministry of Community and Social Services Web site in a similar point of privilege.

This morning I visited several government of Ontario Web sites. Instead of reliable, accurate information, I found partisan political propaganda, propaganda that should not be funded by my constituents and other taxpayers. Earlier today, I forwarded to you five separate Web pages from the Premier of Ontario's official government Web site. Each of them contains blatant partisan attacks on my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and my Liberal colleagues. One government Web page even highlights the Premier's speech to the Burlington Progressive Conservative Riding Association.

In addition, we came into possession yesterday of Intranet communications in the Ministry of Labour, which I provided to you, that were blatantly partisan. It is an affront to taxpayers, and we believe on this side of the House that it's a violation of our privileges as members of this Legislature. I'll speak to you about that violation in the context of intimidation.

As you consider my question of privilege, I want to raise the point that the use of government Web sites for partisan purposes not only violates my privileges as a member of this Legislature but also violates the law. The Public Service Act clearly states in sections 28.1 and 28.2, "No crown employee shall engage in political activity in the workplace." Partisan activities are defined in clause 28.1(1)(a) as "anything in support of or in opposition to a federal or provincial political party." The Public Service Act considers these violations so serious that they can warrant an employee's dismissal.

Mr Speaker, I ask you to look at these additional Web sites that we've provided you with and, as you consider that, I invite you to consider the question of intimidation. I will refer you to the most recent text by Marleau and Montpetit with respect to Canadian parliamentary procedure and read to you two brief but, I believe, salient points.

"Over the years, members have brought to the attention of the House instances which they believed were attempts to obstruct, impede, interfere, intimidate or molest them, their staffs or individuals who had some business with them or the House. In a technical sense, such actions are considered to be contempt of the House and not breaches of privilege. Since these matters relate so closely to the right of the House to the services of its

members, they are often considered to be breaches of privilege.”

It goes on to say, and I quoted several rulings with respect to intimidation, “Speaker Fraser stated, ‘The privileges of a member are violated by any action which might impede him or her in the fulfillment of his or her duties and functions. It is obvious that the unjust damaging of a reputation could cause such an impediment.’”

Further, “In finding a *prima facie* case of privilege on March 21, 1978, Speaker Jerome ruled that the electronic surveillance of a member beyond the parliamentary precinct, ‘... could be regarded as a form of harassment or obstruction or molestation or intimidation of a member, all of which phrases have been used in our precedents to support the position that such conduct is a contempt of the House.’”

Mr Speaker, it is the view of the official opposition that the use by the Minister of Community and Social Services of his government-paid-for and -run Web page, the use by the Ministry of Labour of its government-paid-for Intranet and the use—and this is the most appalling, sir—by the Office of the Premier of Ontario of a government-paid Web site to place partisan political speeches and attempt to, in my view, hurt or harm the reputation not just of my leader, someone whose integrity is without question, but of any member of this House or, frankly, of any citizen of this province, is an attempt by this government to intimidate its opponents using taxpayer dollars in a manner that is completely contemptible and, in my view, sir, violates not only my privileges but the privileges of my colleagues, certainly the privileges of my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and indeed it violates the ethics of the people of the province of Ontario.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, unless you’re going to rule on this immediately, I would like the opportunity to respond in writing to you with our arguments. We don’t believe this is a breach of privilege but we of course haven’t had any prior notice of this, and therefore for us to interject and argue on a rational basis we will have to review some of the documents he’s referring to.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Certainly we’ll look at it. To be fair, though, I should let you know I will circulate it to the other side as well.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Just a quick clarification. He mentioned the Ministry of Labour. Was that the Intranet?

Mr Duncan: Yes, Intranet.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Intranet, the internal—OK, thank you.

The Speaker: I thank the member for his point of privilege and for giving me the information. Again, I want to thank him also for attaching copies of the Internet site. As you know, and as I mentioned again yesterday, often what happens in this situation with technology is that we don’t get copies of that and then when we do go to look, technology being what it is, it has

changed. So I thank the member for attaching that to his point of privilege.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Minister of Education. The Education Improvement Commission produced its final report today. In it your commissioners are telling you what we’ve been telling you on this side of the House now for several years, and that is quite simply that your war that you’re continuing to wage against teachers in Ontario is costing our children terribly.

Here’s a specific finding made by the commission. Students “believe that the ongoing tensions among the Ministry of Education, the school boards, and their teachers have affected their education, and are concerned for themselves and for the students who will follow them. Many told us, with frustration, that every year of their secondary school career has been disrupted by labour disputes.”

In the years to come, these five years will be known quite simply as the Harris years, years in public education which were characterized by teachers sapped of their enthusiasm, schools sapped of their spirit, and general turmoil. Minister, how does it feel knowing that you have robbed an entire generation of high school students of the quality education of which they are so richly worthy?

1420

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I share the EIC’s concern about politics in the classroom. It’s not appropriate, it undermines the work of good teachers, it undermines the work of a good curriculum, and it is not helping our students to learn better or our teachers to teach better. I share that concern. We will continue to take steps to ease that. We will continue to take steps to put in place initiatives that are helping improve student achievement. We’ve set higher standards, and the research is showing that those standards are starting to pay off in terms of increased performance by our students. We need to do more; I recognize that. I share the EIC’s concern that politics in the classroom undermines that.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you just don’t get it on this score. We’re never going to get the best for our children unless we get the best out of our teachers, and you can’t get the best out of our teachers by attacking them day in and day out. It’s not much more complicated than that.

Listen to what the commission says: “We cannot”—I repeat—“cannot overstate our concern about the reduction in extracurricular activities. Research shows that students who take part in extracurricular activities enjoy greater overall success in school, and students who participate in after-school programs have lower dropout rates. If the current impasse continues, it’s clear that

more students will drop out and fewer will succeed.” This commission is telling us that as a result of your policies our students are dropping out of school and those who are staying aren’t doing as well as they could.

Minister, leadership on your part requires that you sit down now, that you declare a ceasefire, that you drop your rhetorical guns and that you bring teachers to the table in a conciliatory fashion. Are you prepared to do that in the interests of our children?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, he may well have missed it, and his research staff may not have pointed it out to him, but we did have a meeting two weeks ago with all of our education partners from Ontario to talk about the concerns that we all share about the lack of extracurricular services for our students, because I agree with the Education Improvement Commission that extracurricular services are very much part of what our students should be getting. Unfortunately, the Ontario Teachers’ Federation did attend; they did not participate. That was disappointing for all of the partners there. We are going to continue to have discussions. The teachers’ federation can certainly be part of that. I have regular meetings with them. I will continue to do that because I see that as my job, but it is their choice about where and how they wish to participate.

If the honourable member was so concerned, where was he when the EQAO and the TIMSS results of testing showed that teachers in the classroom—good, hard-working teachers—are making improvements in student achievement? Did he stand up in this House and congratulate them? No, he didn’t.

Mr McGuinty: This is just too much. This minister who has spent so much time, dedicated energy and effort and brought so much enthusiasm to the task of attacking teachers is now the great defender of teachers in Ontario. This is just too much to swallow.

What I’d ask you to do, Minister, is to take into account the very, very good advice offered by your own commission. This is what they said: “We urge the Ministry of Education to immediately renew dialogue with teachers’ federations, and consult with all education partners as appropriate, with a view to the immediate reinstatement of extracurricular activities.”

Let me tell you once more, Madam Minister, what leadership means in this context. You are the leader of public education in Ontario, not the teachers, not the parents, not the students. You have to make the first move, Madam Minister. You have to declare a ceasefire. You have to say to the teachers, “I want to sit down. I want to work things out with you, because I insist that we all act in the better interests of our children.” That’s the kind of leadership we’ve been looking for. That’s the kind of leadership that’s been missing for the past five years, and our kids have been paying the price as a result.

Are we ever going to see that kind of leadership here in the province of Ontario? Will you stop playing politics with our kids and start acting in their interests?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member seems quite obsessed that there’s some war going on out there.

The only war that is going on is his attempt, on the backs of hard-working teachers, to score political points.

When the TIMSS results showed that our teachers out there in math and science and literature were actually starting to make improvements, when the co-operative efforts of the Ministry of Education and the teachers’ federation put in place supports and training for teachers, when the results are actually showing that those teachers are making a difference in the education of those students, did the Leader of the Opposition stand up in this House and say thank you to them for their hard work? We did. Where was he?

Good quality teachers are important to education. I have said this, and I will continue to say that, because I believe it. Every time he turns around he’s trying to say there’s some war in the education sector. The only war is on—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister’s time is up.

MANDATORY DRUG TESTING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): This question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I want to talk to you about your bent to drug-test welfare recipients in Ontario.

Two important papers have been produced, and I’m sure you’re familiar with them, one by the Addiction Council and the other a background paper prepared by 10 experts in drug addiction in Ontario, including three PhDs and a number of nurses and MDs, a background paper prepared for the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. This is what the experts are telling us. They’re telling us that welfare recipients are no more likely to use drugs than you or I or anybody else in the general population. According to a recent study, out of any 103 Ontarians, let’s say 103 MPPs, during the past year nine of us would have used marijuana and five of us would have used cocaine. The experts are also telling us that your assumption that drug use is a barrier to employment is false. Fully 70% of drug users are gainfully employed today in Ontario.

Minister, why not admit that the reason you want to drug-test welfare recipients, and welfare recipients alone, is because you’re trying to score some cheap political points by pandering to some ugly stereotype that you know is completely false?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): The member opposite may be surprised to learn that I don’t disagree with him on either count. I don’t disagree with him that those folks on welfare are any more likely to use drugs than the rest of the population. I wouldn’t for a moment suggest that. I’ve gone out of my way to say that. I wouldn’t for a moment suggest, as he has suggested, that every single person who is addicted to drugs would face a barrier to employment.

What I do know is that a program for people who are unemployed is likely to have more people where that is a

barrier to employment. That's why we don't want to leave anyone behind. That's why we want to provide mandatory treatment. That's why we want to provide the hand up. That's why we want to provide supports to help people realize the dignity that comes with a job and the pride that comes with independence.

That's why this government isn't prepared to turn its back on any single person in the province. That's why we want to reach out and pull people from the state of despair they find themselves in, so they can make that important transition from welfare to work.

Mr McGuinty: Your actions speak far louder than your words on this score. When you made your plans to drug-test welfare recipients public in Ontario, you invited the TV cameras into a news conference, and you were very dramatic, and with a wonderful flourish you allowed syringes to trickle out of your hands. You put a poster behind you showing people shooting up. The message that came across TV that night for all Ontarians was that—and this is a message that came from you, the Minister of Community and Social Services, the guy who is supposed to be the chief advocate for welfare recipients in Ontario, the guy who is supposed to tell the truth about them and not pander to stereotypes. Your message to Ontarians was, "Welfare recipients are all drug addicts." You should be ashamed of yourself for pandering to an ugly stereotype which you know is completely false. That's exactly what you are up to. Why not admit it?

1430

Hon Mr Baird: I won't admit it, because it's not true. I won't admit it, because our government isn't prepared to turn its back on anyone on welfare. It would be very easy to simply turn our backs on this problem. It would be very easy to say the welfare caseload in Ontario is down by more than 565,000 cases. It would be very easy to declare victory and turn our backs on a group of people who so obviously need help. This government isn't prepared to turn its back on anyone. We want to reach out and provide that support, reach out and provide that treatment, so that people can get their lives back, so that people in this province can realize the dignity that comes with a job and the pride that comes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Please take your seat. Order. It's too noisy. I can't hear the minister. You have about 10 seconds, Minister.

Final supplementary?

Mr McGuinty: Listen to what the Addiction Council experts said about your performance and your props: "The drug of choice for Ontarians whether on welfare or working is alcohol. A very small amount of the general population uses injection drugs as featured on the poster that is being shown for this proposed program. The reference to injection drugs is very damaging to persons on welfare who already are depicted in the media and referenced by the government in less than attractive ways. The stigma associated with drug or alcohol addiction should not be reinforced by dramatic effect."

If you had any sincere and genuine interest in helping people on welfare get into the workplace, then you'd go to those areas where they need real help. I'm talking about literacy issues, transportation issues, child care issues, health problems. Those are all areas where you should be lending your efforts and your support. Instead, what you are doing—and this has been beneath the dignity of your office—is pandering to an ugly stereotype. You're putting out information you know is incorrect, and it's coming at the expense of the very people in this province who are entitled to depend on you, to look to you for help and not to become the subject of attack.

Interjections.

The Speaker: OK. Now we start throwing people out. Order. Now we start warning people. You've had your fun. Now I'll start warning you, and I'll throw you out. It doesn't matter to me. Whoever wants to start—

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Throw 'em out.

The Speaker: And it starts with the Premier too. When I'm standing up here, I don't need comments coming from the Premier as well. Minister.

Hon Mr Baird: What is required, in terms of welfare reform, is a government that's committed to providing the support, care and attention to every problem that anyone on welfare would have, so they can realize the dignity that comes with a job and the pride with independence.

The Leader of the Opposition stands in his place and says what is damaging to people on welfare. I'll tell you what's damaging to people on welfare: a government that was prepared to turn its back on a group of people who so obviously needed help. The honourable member opposite has disagreed with every single welfare reform this government has taken. We introduced workfare. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party disagreed. When we tried to combat welfare fraud, Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party disagreed. When we tried to ensure that employment supports were in place so that people on welfare, who so obviously need our help, could escape the trap—whether the trap was despair, whether the trap was drugs, whether the trap was illiteracy—this party and this government could depend on Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party to oppose the initiative and to turn their backs. The policy written for Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party for people on welfare was written by an insurance adjuster. They want to turn their back and just write people off. Well, this government isn't prepared to do that.

EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. The Education Improvement Commission is urging you to invest in full-day learning for our preschool children. We know you have the money to do it. In fact, we know that you have more than a \$1.4-billion surplus to do it with. That's 1.4 billion good

reasons to provide safe, regulated, affordable child care for working families and to ensure that junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten are provided on a full-day basis across the province.

This is a wonderful opportunity to restore some of the things you've taken out of the education system. Is your government prepared to seize this opportunity and provide children in Ontario with the head start they need in order that they can achieve more, do more with the education system?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the minister can respond.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): As the honourable members will know, trying to help our students be better prepared for learning when they come to school is very much a priority of this government. Through the early years initiative, we are taking considerable steps to do that. We have also been funding schools for JK and kindergarten programs. One of the significant improvements we've made is to actually have curriculum standards for junior kindergarten and kindergarten, something that had been lagging for quite some time, to actually help our teachers with our young children to learn better.

The recommendations from the Education Improvement Commission, as usual, are going to be very helpful. We've adopted many of their recommendations. We have done many of the significant funding investments they've asked us to do. So we'll be looking at this particular recommendation consistent with what our other education partners have asked us to do as well.

Mr Hampton: I asked the question of the Premier because it was the Premier who, before the last election, came forward with the Mustard report on early learning and said that this was something that was a priority for the government. Literally nothing has happened. This is the Premier who discarded all of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Education. This is the Premier who cancelled the already existing early years learning projects. That's the record of your government.

You've issued a lot of press releases and a lot of rhetoric, but in fact what you've done in terms of early childhood education is cancel the early learning projects and move away from full-day kindergarten for our youngest children.

Here is an opportunity. The Education Improvement Commission says this is and ought to be a priority for your government. This could make a real difference. Are you going to follow the recommendation of the Education Improvement Commission, or are you going to issue more rhetoric? Which is it, Minister?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Actually, the Education Improvement Commission in this report, as they have in all of their reports, has made some very excellent recommendations. They've backed them up with good research. We are going to be looking at those recommendations in the context of the other recommendations our education partners are asking us to do. There are a number of priorities that they have for new money in the education

system, and I think we need to give them consideration as well. But I think the honourable member knows full well that there has been considerable follow-up on the Fraser Mustard report. The minister responsible for children, Minister Marland, has done considerable work to get that initiative going, to provide supports in our community for early learning.

The other thing is that we have put and will continue to put money where it does the most good for our children. For example, this year alone, \$70 million in new money is going into early literacy for kindergarten to grade 3. I think we will see, as the years roll by, that this investment and support for those—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up. Final supplementary.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The Early Years Study is gathering dust on the shelf. Your government announced a challenge fund in the budget of May 1999, you reannounced it in the budget of May 2000 and we'll finally have applications for funding ready in the year 2001. Your government has done nothing to respond to the important initiatives in the Early Years Study.

Further, the EIC said today, "But as yet, despite some investment, some progress and much talk, we have no firm commitment—either provincially or federally—to a systemic framework to improve our children's early years."

That's why they made a recommendation for guaranteed access to high-quality child care. That's why they made a recommendation for guaranteed access to family resource centres. That's why they made a recommendation for full funding for full-day junior and senior kindergarten. These are important initiatives. They require a significant investment, and God knows, your government has the money to do it. The question is, will you fully fund the early years initiatives recommended in this report today?

1440

Hon Mrs Ecker: We are fully prepared to fund initiatives that are going to help our children do better before school and during school. That is our commitment, and we have the track record to back that up. I mentioned the \$70 million, just one initiative, new money this year, to help early literacy. We have the early years challenge fund, for example. We do have family resources in this province that the community and social services ministry and the minister responsible for children are working with. They do a wonderful job out there for parents. We have over \$215 million that is going out to low-income and working families to help them with their children. That was something I would think the honourable member would support because that is real dollars in the pockets of low-income and working families to help them with their children. That is an important support. We are doing more to help support parents in helping them be part of the learning team. So it's an important recommendation. They've said over the next five to seven years, we should look to try and—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up, I'm afraid.

MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. Yesterday we learned that senior officials in the ministry of corrections oversaw the publishing of a list of young offenders and the distribution of that list to members of the public. Those activities are clearly in breach of the criminal law of Canada. Today we learned from the Probation Officers Association of Ontario that the ministry of corrections is routinely providing the records of young offenders to organizations that are outside the justice and corrections system—yet another breach of the criminal law of Canada.

My question is this: since this doesn't seem to be just one accidental slip-up but a series of rather systemic events, what are you doing, Premier, to hold the officials in your government accountable and to clean up this mess?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Just to correct the record, we didn't learn anything today. What we learned today was that there was an allegation, and we treat all allegations very seriously. You treat them as fact; we treat them as allegations until they have been thoroughly investigated.

We have, indeed, asked for an investigation, both my deputy and the deputy responsible for the Ministry of Correctional Services. They've announced a major administrative review of policies, procedures and practices that flow from the confidentiality provisions of the Young Offenders Act. I can tell you that the deputy has instructed Mr Paul Fleury, the regional director of community and young offender services for the western region, to assume the executive lead for that. As you know, the Deputy Attorney General is looking at this matter, as is the protocol arising out of what occurred, which was the first part of your question. If you have more in the supplementary, I'm happy to try to shed more light on that, too.

Mr Hampton: This is not about any criminal investigation that may involve Mr Galt. This is about a series of events in the ministry of corrections which would indicate that, while you pronounce one thing to the public about obeying the law, your government in the ministry of corrections routinely goes about ignoring the criminal law of Canada. We spoke with some of the people who work at the Brookside young offenders facility and they indicated to us that, for example, at the ceremony that was held, the assistant deputy minister for corrections was in attendance. She was in attendance when the list of young offenders' names was published. She was in attendance when the list was provided to members of the public, including Mr Galt.

So this is not about a criminal investigation of one individual. This is about asking you, Premier, to be accountable for a ministry where it seems that breaking the criminal law is becoming almost an everyday occurrence and where senior officials of the ministry are present when this happens and seem to let it happen without any repercussions until it gets out in the wider

public, until it gets known in the media. What are you doing to hold these officials accountable, Premier, and don't tell us about a limited criminal investigation of Mr Galt. What are you doing about your own government to ensure they obey the criminal law of Canada?

Hon Mr Harris: As I indicated to you, there is a review underway, and if we have any more information, we would be happy to share that with you. You keep referring to allegations as if they were facts. This seems to be a bad habit with the leader of the Liberal Party and it will get you into the same kind of trouble it gets him into when the facts he alleges turn out to be myth, turn out to be fiction, turn out just not there.

I can tell you this with regard to your allegation: there is no directive from the ministry for any probation or parole officer to share information inappropriately. There has been an allegation that has been brought to the ministry's attention. There is an investigation into that claim. To date there's not a shred of evidence to support it, but we are still investigating.

MINISTRIES' WEB SITES

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a question for the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet. Yesterday and earlier today I raised points of privilege with respect to what the official opposition contends are the misuse of government-funded, government-paid-for Web sites. We cited yesterday the Minister of Community and Social Services. We cited today the Premier's office. We cited the Minister of Labour's use of the Ministry of Labour Intranet, which we have distributed throughout this building this afternoon for others to see.

I wonder if you consider this to be an appropriate use of government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Sorry for the interruption. The member for Windsor-St Clair.

Mr Duncan: I wonder if you consider this kind of bullying and intimidation an appropriate use of government resources.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm pleased to answer this question for the member of the opposition. The use of Web sites is one of our initiatives to make sure the government of Ontario moves toward an e-government, so to speak, to become world leaders in that field by the year 2003, one year ahead of the federal Liberal government of Canada's pledge of 2004. This is essential if you want to move into the modern era where more people have access to the Internet. The fastest growing group of people who are on the Internet are senior citizens.

In terms of the appropriateness of what is on a Web site, I think you're fully aware that you've already asked the Speaker to rule on that.

Mr Duncan: The minister is right. In fact you published a document called Operating Procedure on Usage of IT Resources and you signed it in July of this year. Let

me read to you a very important section about unacceptable activity on Web sites. I quote from the minister's document: "It is unacceptable activity if there is a breach of the Public Service Act." Section 28 of the Public Service Act prevents public servants from participating in political activity. We say there's been a breach. It goes on to say, "The Public Service Act conflict of interest regulation or the conflict of interest in post-employment directive," and let's continue by saying, "Electronic networks should not be used for private business, for personal gain, for profit or for political activities." That is your document. It goes on to say, "The electronic technology of the government should not be used to discredit others in the government through electronic communications."

This morning we looked at the federal government's Web pages; we looked at the government of Alberta; we looked at the government of Quebec; we looked at every province in this country. Not one other government has a partisan reference under any section of its Web site except this government, which insists on using them in an illegal fashion, in the view of the official opposition, to discredit not only our leader and our party, but moreover to bully the people of Ontario. Why don't you show some courage? Why don't you read your directives, instead of your glib, cheap answers about other governments, and start acting like a minister and do what your own bloody report says you should do and get the partisan nonsense off your Web page?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The only one in this Legislature trying to bully anyone by huffing and puffing and pointing his finger is you. You've asked the Speaker to rule on what you consider partisan advertising. Our Web sites have a policy that we implement through Management Board, along with all other directives. You've asked the Speaker to rule on this. Why are you trying to circumvent what you've already asked him to rule on?

1450

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Over the past couple of weeks, I've had a number of inquiries from individuals, from groups and organizations and from the press as well, on both sides of the amalgamation issue. Essentially I understand that our government announced today that the town of Blind River will annex all or part of seven surrounding unincorporated geographical townships, and I hope constituents of ours know exactly what "unincorporated" stands for. Minister, can you tell us what this means for not only the residents of Blind River but also the affected townships that are being annexed?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'd like to thank the honourable member from Oshawa for the question. This gives me an opportunity to congratulate the Blind River council and the representatives from the surrounding unorganized ter-

ritories for coming together and taking what we think is responsible and positive action. The head of council and six councillors elected during this past municipal election for the town of Blind River will continue to serve in the new council.

We've also created a transition committee composed of two members of the Blind River council and five members representing the annexed area. They will deal with transitional matters and make recommendations to the new council. This is yet another example of municipal leaders across the province exploring ways to benefit their own taxpayers through lower taxes, improved services and more responsible local governments. This will provide more effective local government in this particular area as well.

Mr Ouellette: So our constituents inquiring on these issues know how it takes place, could you please also tell us in the House today how this initiative came about and how successful restructuring has been in the province?

Hon Mr Clement: As in the great majority of cases, this was a locally arrived at solution that was decided upon completely locally, where the municipalities and their civic leaders came together to discuss local solutions and local options. That is how this came together. I would like to again congratulate the town for bringing forward the proposal. I'm confident they'll be able to operate much more effectively in their new boundaries.

Since 1996, local government reform in this province has meant that the number of municipalities has been reduced from 815 in 1996 down to 447 as of January 1 next year. The number of municipal councillors in the province has been reduced from 4,586 in 1996 down to 2,804 as of January 1, 2001. Better government, more effective government, more accountable government at less cost to the taxpayer.

FARMING PRACTICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. For over a year now, we've been asking for provincial legislation regulating our farming operations, particularly insofar as dealing with their manure. It's not just me who has been asking that for quite some time now. The auditor has been asking for that legislation. The Environmental Commissioner has been asking for that legislation. Our farmers have been asking for that legislation. They want one set of rules that applies right across the province. And of course our municipalities are asking for that kind of legislation. Just recently, the mayor of Chatsworth, Howard Greig—and he said this because there's a new farm going up in his community—said, "I'm not confident that without the proper provincial legislation we can adequately protect our citizens."

Minister, this is all about our groundwater. It's all about making sure that the water that ultimately comes out of the tap is safe and clean for Ontarians to drink. Why are you continuing to fail Ontarians by not pro-

ducing this legislation when so many have been calling for it for so long?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I refer the question to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I just want to say to the Leader of the Opposition that a safe water supply is of utmost importance to the public health of our communities and our agricultural communities.

As the member opposite will know, we started consultations on the changing face of farming last January to get comments from the public on that, to see what needed to be done. We got a report from my parliamentary assistant as to some of the recommendations that were received. We took the information from that report.

We then started consultations in conjunction with other ministries to make sure, as the auditor suggested, that we could come forward with a plan that would deal with all the needs of our society, to make sure that we protect the quality of our water in this province.

Mr McGuinty: The fact that the Minister of the Environment has fobbed this off on to someone else tells me that nothing has changed over there. The protection of our groundwater is your responsibility; it's not the responsibility of the Minister of Agriculture.

Maybe you should just listen to what your own Premier said a few weeks back in this House. He said, in response to my questions, "we agree with the Environmental Commissioner that this is a matter for the Ministry of the Environment." He said, "We agree, when it comes to groundwater, the Ministry of the Environment must be the lead agency to develop the legislation to bring forward."

That's your job. Even your Premier says that's your job. How long are our farmers going to have to wait, how long are our municipalities going to have to wait, how long are Ontarians going to wait, until you do your job? One more time, where's the bill?

Hon Mr Hardeman: I want to assure the member opposite that we share his concern about the quality of our water, and indeed it is a very important environmental issue to protect the groundwater in the province of Ontario. But I think it's even more important to consult with the farmers and to deal with the changing face of agriculture and to make sure that, as farmers, as agriculturists, we are looking after the effluent from our farms to make sure that it's being used for nutrient management as opposed to getting into our waters, and we are doing that.

We're not prepared to come out and stand here and say we know the answers. We want to make sure that we consult with all our communities—the non-farming community, the farming community and the municipalities—to make sure we come forward with a plan that will address the issue.

It's more important to come forward with the right plan than to come forward with a hasty plan.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I have a question for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I believe that most people, perhaps even the members of the NDP and the Liberals in the Legislature, now recognize that skills and training are the keys to success in the modern economy. As the requirement to find and keep rewarding jobs increases, so does the need for better training. In my own riding of Kitchener Centre, thanks to the activities of this government, the economy is so red-hot that our people resources are stretched to the limit. There needs to be more people trained.

Additionally, it is increasingly evident that we have to do more than ever thought necessary in the past to ensure that Ontarians are learning throughout their lives. While government and educational institutions have an obligation to meet this challenge, the private sector has an important role to play, too. Recently, in Waterloo region there have been significant investments in training and research by such companies as Research in Motion and Mortice Kerns and their executives, as well as others.

Minister, what role do you see the private sector playing in building a skilled workforce that can compete with the best in the world?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): Ensuring that Ontario's workforce has the skills necessary to succeed is a responsibility shared by government, our partners in education and training and, of course, the private sector.

There is huge enthusiasm. In fact, I'd like to advise my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly that just yesterday at St Clair College in Windsor, Ontario, the Ford Motor Co of Canada made a \$3-million donation to support a new manufacturing and training facility, right in Windsor.

I think all of you would like to know that at the end of December the president of the Ford Motor Co of Canada, Bobbie Gaunt, will be retiring. She's a person who cares a lot about young people and education, and I think this was a tremendous commitment on her part as a leader in making sure that those young people, people involved in apprenticeship training, will have this opportunity at this new facility.

1500

Mr Wettlaufer: Minister, our government has made significant investments in training, including \$228 million for the access to opportunities program and \$130 million for the strategic skills initiative. But while we encourage industry, we must also ensure that any barriers to training are examined to ensure that government is not standing in the way of more training for Ontarians. What steps has the government taken to encourage greater private sector investment in skills training?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: This has been a tremendous plan on behalf of the government and we have in fact taken concrete steps to encourage the private sector to invest in training. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them for their tremendous commitment, especially to SuperBuild, where we have about \$0.8 billion to

support \$1.8 billion in new construction right across the province, much of which will of course be in the training field.

We introduced Bill 55, which makes Ontario's apprenticeship system more responsive to the needs of employers and does remove barriers to expanding training in new trades and areas of economic growth.

We're very excited about OYAP, the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, which is \$5.4 million in our schools, to encourage young people to enter the trades.

Through the leading education technology co-operative education tax credit, we're encouraging employers—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. Today is a very important day because we remember the 14 victims of the Montreal massacre. It's also a crisis year because we've had a record number of killings of women as a result of domestic violence, so much so that an emergency task force of women's groups came here earlier this fall and asked your government to implement a number of emergency measures. When I asked you to commit to those emergency measures last week, you said that your government has already implemented some of them. But, Premier, the women's coalition which has come here on a number of occasions says that's not true. They say your government has not acted on a single emergency measure they have called for. Why won't you take action to prevent violence against women, as these women are asking you to do?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): We have.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): OK, Premier, I want to ask you about another aspect of your remarks on violence against women. When I asked you to reinstate vital services that women need, that your government took away, you said, "We are trying very hard to ensure that women who are in abusive situations are not financially dependent and we don't think you solve that problem by making them financially dependent on the state."

I don't know if you understand how deeply offensive that statement really is. Poverty and emotional stress are very harsh realities for battered women who leave abusive situations. For many, social assistance shelters, second-stage housing, subsidized housing and other community supports are their only hope of leaving and staying safe. I cannot believe that you want to deny women that opportunity. I'm asking you, Premier—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Yes, he did. I'm asking you, Premier, will you retract that statement and reinstate the community services that you have so cruelly taken away from battered women and their children in this province?

Hon Mr Harris: Given that we're spending substantially more money than your party ever did on preventing violence to women, I'm surprised that you want us to undo some of this new spending. Of the 39 demands that were proposed by the Cross-Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group, we have implemented or are implementing a whole host of these issues, contrary to what your party alleges.

They asked us to fund community outreach workers for rape crisis centres. We've done that. They asked us to fund counsellors within rape crisis centres. We have done that. The group asked us to ensure sufficient funding to French-language services, to community-based agencies. Our network of regional French-language services coordinators have been providing support to health care facilities and agencies. They asked for changes to the legal aid system. The Attorney General facilitated a meeting on December 1 between the cross-sectoral strategy group and the chair of Legal Aid Ontario. I understand the meeting went very well.

We have implemented or are implementing more than 90% of the May-Iles coroner's jury recommendations. More than 70% of the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Domestic Violence have been or will be implemented—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the Premier's time is up.

ONTARIO INNOVATION TRUST

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is for the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. As you may be aware, the auditor's report last week raised some issues surrounding the Ontario Innovation Trust. This is the fund that is responsible to your ministry. In his report he alleged that "the government used the trust to significantly exaggerate its spending on 'innovation' in that fiscal year." Specifically, he mentioned the fact that in the previous two budget statements, \$500 million was earmarked for the trust, so it was assumed this transfer would be made.

In fact the auditor reports that for the fiscal year ending March 31, "only \$161 million of the initial ... contribution had been approved for matching funding by the trust, of which only \$2.5 million was disbursed for eligible projects" in that year. You can see why there's some confusion. Perhaps today we can shed some light on this particular disparity.

I'd like to ask if you would explain to Ontario taxpayers and to this House, exactly what is the relationship of you and your ministry to the fund?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): There are a couple of questions there. The fund is an arm's-length trust that has been put in place to support innovative projects and infrastructure in research and development in the province. Its primary role is to match federal government's grants for science and technology under the Canada Foundation for Innovation. Through an agreement with the federal government, we jointly decide on projects in Ontario that need to be

invested in. The trust board disburses funds to match federal government grant money.

In addition to that, scientists are entitled to apply directly to the fund for their own infrastructure projects to deal with laboratories or equipment they may need to carry out their research.

To date, a large amount of money—a total of \$750 million—has been put in over three budgets, and about \$288 million has been spent. That trust is chaired by Michael Gourley, the former Deputy Minister of Finance of Ontario. I think they're doing a very good job on behalf of the people of Ontario in disbursing the money—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Mr Patten: Minister, you didn't really answer the question. The question really was, what is your relationship to that in terms of accountability? That's what is really at stake here. I have no qualms at all with the objectives and the purpose of the fund and the good things I hope it will do. However, I do worry about transparency and accountability. It is supposed to be arm's-length. It is 100% funded—\$750 million of resources. All the people who sit on that board are Lieutenant Governor in Council appointments made by your government.

The auditor pointed out a lack of ministerial accountability, though, for the trust activities. He was concerned about the fact he could not conduct value-for-money audits of the Ontario Innovation Trust. In its response to the auditor, the finance ministry said, "The results of this audit will be available to the public and beneficiaries of the trust."

I ask you two things: (1) Will you table with this House the audited report that has not been made public? (2) Will you assure us that the Provincial Auditor will have access to do value-for-money audits in the future?

Hon Mr Wilson: The answer to those questions is, I'm more than happy to. If the honourable member goes to the trust Web site right now, he will see the 1999 audited statements—and the year 2000 audited statements as soon as they are available.

This trust has to meet all the laws of the land. It is a non-profit board and has to meet all the rules of that. It has to meet all the rules and laws of trust in this province and this country. In addition, it is accountable to this Parliament through the minister. It is very transparent, because they are using public money. Their audited financial statements are available on the Web site and, as I said, when the year 2000 statements are available, we'll make sure they're posted right away. I'll be sure to provide the honourable member with a copy, and to all the people of Ontario who would like one.

1510

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Reforming our welfare system has been a central priority

of our government, and providing hands-on, direct support to welfare recipients to help them obtain employment is essential if we are to continue to see our welfare rolls decline. There are those who have suggested that in order to make work-for-welfare work, it will require a substantial financial investment in employment supports. Minister, do you believe we are spending enough and are you prepared to put more financial resources into helping welfare recipients get a job?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We in this caucus recognize that it takes more than a growing economy fuelled by tax cuts, it takes more than welfare reform and new legislation to help people make that important transition from welfare to work. We recognize that we've got to make a significant number of investments in employment supports.

We spend a significant amount on basic education and literacy programs, job skills training, structured employment supports and workfare placements in the private and public sectors; through our Learning, Earning and Parenting program to help teenage parents, through child care supports and transportation allowances. As the case-load falls, we will have more money than ever per welfare recipient to provide that support, to focus attention, energy and resources on helping those who are left.

We celebrate the fact that 565,000 people have been able to leave the welfare system and we're committing that we're going to take those resources that were used to help over a million people to help the 450,000 people who so desperately need our help to make that important transition from welfare to work and realize the dignity that comes with a job.

Mrs Munro: Minister, obviously Ontario Works is only half the issue. There's another side to that, and that is providing help to Ontario's disability support program recipients. This is equally important. People with disabilities resented the old system, a system that labelled them permanently unemployable. What are you and your ministry doing to help Ontario disability support system recipients move into employment?

Hon Mr Baird: The member is certainly correct. Initially, early on in our first mandate, we moved to take people with disabilities right off our welfare rolls, right out of the welfare system. It's a program where I don't believe they ever should have been in the first place. I know many members on this side of the House and on all sides of the House would share that goal.

I think probably most importantly, we eliminated the label "permanently unemployable," and not just the label but the thought and the philosophy behind that label, which for many years in this province was acceptable in all quarters but which was wrong.

In terms of financial resources, we are in the process, as the member opposite discussed, of doubling the budget for the Ontario disability support program's employment supports, to provide more support for people with disabilities to move into employment.

People with disabilities want to work. They want to have that opportunity. They just need the employment supports that the government is putting forward, and we'll continue to work to do that.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I had a farmer stop in on the weekend and show me samples of this year's crop. He showed me corn that was underdeveloped and wet. He told me that because of increased fuel costs, he was not going to combine the rest of his crop and let weather conditions dry the crop down and risk snow damage.

In the past few months I have heard from dairy farmers across eastern Ontario and they tell me that because of the cold, wet weather we had this spring, the corn and hay crops produced this year are of poor quality. As a result, milk production has dropped significantly.

I've heard this story every day, and the longer you wait, the worse it gets. Unlike you, Quebec and Alberta have already taken a leadership role to try to save their agricultural communities. They have provided financial support over and above the 60-40 split with the federal government. You, on the other hand, have done nothing.

Minister, without a strong agricultural sector our rural economy will collapse. Why don't you take a leadership role and help the struggling farmers in times of crisis?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Thank you very much, to the member opposite, for the question. I recognize that Ontario farmers have indeed been facing a difficult year in terms of commodity prices, especially in the grain and oilseed industry. As last year was also a bad year, obviously one compounds the other and things keep getting worse for them. I want to assure him that to help farmers through the crop year we have provided them with interim market revenue payments, more so than last year. We put \$35 million into the hands of Ontario farmers as the interim payment. We have moved forward with a second interim payment, to send out another 30% of the market revenue payment to help farmers through these difficult times.

I can assure the member opposite that our concern for the farmers is there, and we want to make sure we do everything we can to help them through these difficult situations.

Mr Cleary: Minister, I don't think you've answered my question. Unless you step in now and take a leadership role, we will have a real crisis. The farmers didn't cause this. It's the seasonal weather conditions this year. We normally have better growing weather. I'm telling you, farmers can't wait any longer. Unless you step in and do something a lot of the farmers are going to lose their livelihood. How much longer are you going to wait before you step in and help the farmers? Please try to answer my question this time.

Hon Mr Hardeman: I want to assure the member opposite that we are answering the question. As a gov-

ernment we are committed, as we were in the Blueprint, to get our fair share of the federal safety net money for our Ontario farmers, which prior to that commitment we were not getting. In negotiating that deal, we got another \$30 million from the federal government to go toward our farmers in Ontario. Along with that we had a commitment that we would top that up with our 40%, as a government. So now that will be \$50 million more to help our farmers through these difficult times this year.

I want to assure the member opposite that we really do appreciate the fact that the farmers are facing difficulties and that we need to work with them. We are also calling on the federal government to put more money toward the market revenue program. Incidentally, the member opposite will know we are the only province in Canada that still has the market revenue program, which he will know is a program that helps fund commodity prices when prices drop the way they have in this past year.

I can assure the member opposite we are working with our farm communities, we are working with the federal government and we are working with all the stakeholders to make sure that we can bring—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Today is the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. I can tell you that as a father with two daughters and three granddaughters, the events that took place in Montreal 11 years ago are of very special importance to me. We've heard the statements from the opposition members earlier and I want to say that I share their concerns about violence against women. Minister, what are we doing to prevent violence against women?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member for the question. I think everyone across the province with young daughters, granddaughters and wives is concerned about this issue. Let me start by saying that this government will not tolerate domestic violence. We're proud of our record in preventing violence against women and we're working to provide appropriate services for all women who have been victims of abuse. We're helping them to build a better life for themselves and their families.

Money isn't the only thing that matters in a situation like this, but the government has moved from \$100 million in 1995 to \$135 million this year and \$140 million next year in spending on programs that help women in domestic violence situations. My colleague the Attorney General has done more in the justice system to help women who have suffered domestic abuse, and has worked on the domestic courts to make sure they are the finest courts in the land, processing more quickly and making sure there is more availability—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the member's time is up.

1520

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Ontario Legislature. It is northerners demanding that the Harris government eliminate health care apartheid.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation"—that's the health care apartheid and discrimination;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location"—that's a fact;

"Whereas a recently released Oracle research poll confirms that 92% of Ontarians support equal health travel funding; and whereas the Minister of Health, Elizabeth Witmer, and the Premier of this province, Michael Harris, continue to practice discrimination against northerners;

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province; and

"Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Lougheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment; and whereas Gerry Lougheed Jr and northerners and Ontarians across Ontario are not going to give up the fight despite the government's inaction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid" and discrimination "which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

Of course I'm in agreement with this petition. I affix my signature to it and give it to Jared to bring to the table.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas children are exposed to sexually explicit material in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation which will:

"Create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to sexually explicit material in retail establishments;

"Make it illegal to sell, rent, or loan sexually explicit materials to minors."

I am pleased to attach my signature to this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it has been determined that recent funding allocations to the developmental services sector in the communities of Sarnia-Lambton, Chatham-Kent, and Windsor-Essex have been determined to be grossly inadequate to meet critical and urgent needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Community and Social Services immediately review the funding allocations to the communities of Sarnia-Lambton, Chatham-Kent and Windsor-Essex and provide funding in keeping with the requests made by families or their agents."

It is signed by a number of persons from Chatham and Grande Pointe. I affix my signature to it and pass it on to Rose.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): "Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;

"Whereas a recently released Oracle research poll confirms that 92% of Ontarians support equal health travel funding;

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province; and

"Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Lougheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer care;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and

eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

Since I agree with this, I will sign it and I will send it down with Tim to the table.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition. It was actually given to me by Dave Boyd from my constituents Arnold Kerry, Alex Williamson and a number of others.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario's vintage auto enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or amend the Highway Traffic Act to allow vintage auto enthusiasts to use year of manufacturing plates when registering their vehicles."

I'm pleased to endorse and sign this petition on their behalf.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislature Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas patients requiring eye care in Niagara are faced with a shortage of ophthalmologists and, as a result, are compelled to wait several weeks to secure an appointment with an ophthalmologist;

"Whereas Niagara patients who require potentially vision-saving eye surgery have to, in many cases, wait for several months to have that surgery scheduled;

"Whereas, while the shortage of ophthalmologists is occurring, the removal of billing caps on these medical specialists provides a temporary but essential easing of the health care crisis;

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health's solution of removing exemptions of the billing cap and forcing patients from Niagara to travel along the very busy Queen Elizabeth Highway to receive treatment in Hamilton is unacceptable;

"Whereas Dr Jeffrey Sher, chief of eye surgery at Hamilton Health Sciences Corp has written to the Minister of Health informing her that Hamilton does not have

a sufficient number of practising ophthalmologists to handle additional cases from Niagara;

"Be it resolved that the Ontario Ministry of Health remove the cap on billing for ophthalmologists in Niagara until such time as Niagara is no longer an underserved area."

I agree completely with this petition, and I affix my signature to it and give it to Miranda.

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas charities such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraisers on streets, sidewalks and parking lots;

"Whereas the Safe Streets Act, 1999 effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities; and

"Whereas charitable organizations are dependent on these fundraisers to raise much-needed money and awareness;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the government of Ontario amend provincial legislation by passing Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act, 2000, to allow charitable organizations to conduct fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots."

This is signed by a number of constituents in St Thomas, Aylmer and Elgin county, including such individuals as Harold Boe and David Rock, and I affix my signature in full agreement. Thank you, Jared.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to be used on vintage automobiles."

I affix my name to this petition.

1530

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): As the CCAC case managers' strike in Hamilton is now in its ninth week, and as the CCAC has commenced to hire replacement workers for the striking managers who are on the picket line, I will read the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are a higher number of elderly people and people with disabilities living in the Hamilton-Wentworth region, because of the excellence of the health care system in the area; and

"Whereas the case managers and placement coordinators in the Hamilton-Wentworth Community Care Access Centre have higher caseloads than other community care access centres in the central-southwest region; and

"Whereas the staff at the Hamilton-Wentworth Community Care Access Centre are paid less than their counterparts in the central-southwest region; and

"Whereas the health care system in Hamilton-Wentworth is a self-contained seamless system; and

"Whereas increasing funding will be needed to provide health care services to citizens in the future in this self-contained seamless system; and

"Whereas all workers working in the health care system, and the citizens of Hamilton-Wentworth, expect adequate funding for the health care system in toto in Hamilton-Wentworth, both now and in the future and recognize the equal importance of all the parts of the seamless health care system;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to provide adequate funding immediately to the Hamilton-Wentworth Community Care Access Centre so that pay and conditions of staff will be equal to those in other community care access centres in the central-southwest region; and that adequate funding will continue to be provided in the future according to the needs of the community."

I am pleased to add my signature to this, and send this petition down with Aaron.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP"—my good colleague—"John R. O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car

collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to be used on vintage automobiles."

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas this government has reduced funding for Ontario's special education programs without regard to the impact these changes are having on some of the province's most vulnerable children; and

"Whereas these special-needs students are now struggling with reductions in the amount of support they require with special education teachers, education assistants and classroom resources; and

"Whereas these high-need children thrive on consistency and routine and these disruptions in their educational support are negatively affecting their progress and self-esteem;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore fair and equitable funding to special education so that parents and teachers can provide the best future for our children."

I agree with this petition, and I proudly sign my name to it and will hand it to this lovely page, Heather.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I really am flattered by the number of people who are responding to this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole and former MPP John Parker"—in fact, he used to sit right here—"have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act" to allow vintage auto enthusiasts to use year-of-manufacturing licence plates when registering their vehicles.

I'm pleased to give this to our great page, Geoff, and he will present it to the table on behalf of the people of Durham.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it has been determined that recent funding allocations to the developmental services sector in the communities of Sarnia-Lambton, Chatham-Kent, and Windsor-Essex have been determined to be grossly inadequate to meet critical and urgent needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Community and Social Services immediately review the funding allocations to the communities of Sarnia-Lambton, Chatham-Kent, and Windsor-Essex, and provide funding in keeping with the requests made by families and/or their agents."

I affix my signature to this petition, and I will be giving it to David.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 5, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 147, An Act to revise the law related to employment standards / *Projet de loi 147, Loi portant révision du droit relatif aux normes d'emploi.*

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Continuing our position from the NDP perspective on Bill 147, I'd like to begin the completion of my remarks by first reading into the record an article that was published by professor Judy Fudge of Osgoode Hall, who happens to be an expert in employment legislation. The government, of course, claims that it's only the opposition that really cares about public hearings, that we're making a mountain out of a molehill. We've heard all their rhetoric. This is what a law professor has to say about the law and the lack of any kind of public hearings or public participation since the bill has been tabled:

"The government has rewritten the Employment Standards Act. This is an important law because it provides basic employment rights, everything from minimum wage to working hours and parental leave, for workers in Ontario. It affects almost every worker in the province. The government proposes completely to overhaul this basic law in two weeks. Why is the government in such a hurry? Why won't it let people have a say about employment rights?

"The government needs to slow down. Some of the changes it has introduced are just plain bad public policy.

The proposed law would take away rights employees already have won. It would make it easier for employers to make employees work longer hours. It would take overtime pay out of employees' pockets and put it into employers'. It is not good public policy to make employees work more hours, especially when people's lives are already squeezed, and pay them less for doing so. People need to talk about these changes before they are turned into law.

"In rewriting the legislation, the government has changed much of the wording and reorganized it. It may be good. It may be bad. Who knows? People need time to read through the proposed law, figure it out and compare it to what the existing Employment Standards Act says. Some of this new language changes important definitions in the legislation. This could mean either more or fewer people are covered by minimum standards. No one knows. The government has not even discussed it."

Anyone who deals with legislation on a regular basis knows that definitions are crucial. The devil is always in the detail. I would remind anybody watching or reading the Hansards after the fact that this is not just a few amendments. It's a brand new law from front to back, and it replaces five existing pieces of legislation. It wipes out five of them and they're replaced by this bill. In less than two weeks, with no public input, it's going to become the law of the land and affect—detrimentally, I will argue—millions of people. Millions. This is it. This is the bare minimum standard.

1540

If you don't have a collective agreement and you want to know what your rights are or your child's rights, if you have a teenager or a young person in the family that's out working and they don't have a collective agreement, the only protection that you have in law is this one. This is it, and it's being rammed through here once again at lightning speed. As I mentioned yesterday, that means both pieces of legislation, the two pillars of labour law in the province of Ontario—the Ontario Labour Relations Act basically and primarily talks about the laws and the parameters regarding the relationship between unions and their employer vis-à-vis the legal rules they have to work under. The brand new Ontario Labour Relations Act was rammed through this place in October 1995: a brand new act, front to back, not one minute of public hearings. Now the Employment Standards Act, the bare minimum for those who don't have benefit of a collective agreement, is being rammed through in exactly the same process. Where's the legitimacy in that?

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, you've got the legal right to do it, but where's the moral right, where's the ethical right to ram through legislation that has such a profound impact on the very quality of working life that millions of people work under, and nobody gets a say? How can that be? How can the media allow this to go on without making it a bigger issue? I'm really concerned about the desensitization that seems to have taken place in the public and in the media about the number of bills that go through this place without any public input.

I've been scrambling the last few days, trying to get legal interpretations of what this bill means so that I can offer up, hopefully, an informed, intelligent comment on what I think the implications are on behalf of my NDP colleagues. But this government is rushing it through so fast we can't get those legal interpretations. Is that a coincidence? No. There's something really wrong in a democracy when there's not enough time for the experts.

We deal with a lot of rhetoric in this place, but there are the lawyers and the labour representatives and people who have an obligation to deal with this on a day-to-day basis, and the individual language that's in here makes a huge difference. We need to understand those legal implications if we're to understand the social implications. Why can't that happen? Is there some magical law of physics that's preventing that kind of dialogue and intelligent discourse from taking place? No. The only thing that's limiting that kind of an intelligent debate is that this government is ramming it through.

I guess as long as the public galleries are pretty much empty, the way they are today, and as long as the media treats it as, "Oh, well, that's the Harris government; they're like that," then I guess nothing's going to change. Anybody who is upset about this—I can remember making a similar speech back in 1995. I'm only a little less loud than I was then, simply because I guess I've lived with watching this happen. We've had election laws changed, the funding of elections changed with no public input, just rammed through—unprecedented. We never had those kinds of changes before.

The government knows that if things continue, if it's not on the front page—we've got occupations of ministers' offices, Premier's constituency offices yesterday. It hardly made a blip. What are people supposed to do? But I would say that when I look around today and I look at the papers and I watch the news and listen to the radio, it would seem they're going to win. They have a majority government, they're going to win the vote, that's for sure. But this broader issue of democracy is going by and people are going to wake up in 2001 and find out that there's a brand new law. If you belong to a union, it's like waking up January 1, 2001, and finding out your whole collective agreement has been changed overnight and you didn't get a say. For the millions of people who are covered by the Employment Standards Act only, with no union, no collective agreement, that's what's happening to them right here and now, and nobody seems to be doing much about it. It's scary, and why would it stop? If the government can get away with it, why would they stop?

Let me start to deal with some of the particular sections in here. First of all, I want to deal with the issue of the 60-hour workweek. It's in part VII of Bill 147, subsection 17(2). It says:

"An employer may permit an employee to work up to a specified number of hours in excess of an amount set out in subsection (1) if,

"(a) the employee agrees to work those hours; and

"(b) the employee will not work more than 60 hours or such other number of hours as are prescribed in a work week."

First of all, before I deal with the implications of a 60-hour workweek—and I want to deal with those at the same time that I deal with the averaging of wages in terms of determining overtime rates—I want to take one step back before I deal with those two issues specifically to deal head-on with this issue that the government talks about in terms of, "It can only be done by mutual consent." The minister said it yesterday; I expect there are going to be members of the government backbenches who are going to try to take all of the horror stories that I think are quite legitimate and real and say, "They don't really matter, because if someone doesn't want this, they just have to say no."

Obviously, anybody who's arguing that point is either ignoring their own experience or has never experienced the workplace, certainly workplaces where you aren't dealing with people who have rights—because there's no contract; there's no union here. If we're dealing with a group of PhDs in some circumstance in a lab somewhere, I suppose they probably could fend for themselves. But for the vast majority of people—don't just take my word for it; let's take a look at what the Supreme Court of Canada had to say. Again, keep in mind that the government is arguing that if somebody's being asked to work 60 hours a week, meaning over the standard workweek, after 48, they can say no. Our argument is that's a ridiculous point to try and make when there is an absolute, total disharmony of the power relationship in a workplace.

The workplace is not a democracy. There are employees and employers. The boss has the upper hand. The boss is the boss is the boss. That's supposed to be offset by rights, by laws. But there's nothing here. They've eliminated the permit system. I'm going to talk about that too, because that's their other great defence: "Oh, don't worry about eliminating the permit system. It didn't really work anyway." But now they're arguing, "If you don't want to work 60 hours"—it's like a commercial. They think work life is like a commercial: everything's nice and clean and sparkly and the world's great. It's like you see people who work at a gas station on TV: there's not a grease spot on them; everything's nice and glimmering, and the glint off their teeth. They think that's the real world. That's not the real world. The real world is, when the boss comes over and says, in whatever fashion, "I'd like you to work beyond 48 hours this week," it is not just a matter of saying, "Thanks a lot. I appreciate the offer, but I'm really not interested." "Oh, that's fine. I'm sorry to disturb you. I'm sorry I upset you in any way. I'll just go on and ask someone else." That's not the way the world works.

1550

What does the Supreme Court of Canada say about that very point? In *Slaight Communications v Davidson*, 1989, the Supreme Court of Canada had this to say about the power relationship in a workplace between employers

and employees where there is not the protection of a union:

"The relation between an employer and an isolated employee or worker is typically a relation between a bearer of power and one who is not a bearer of power. In its inception it is an act of submission. In its operation it is a condition of subordination.... The main object of labour law has always been, and we venture to say will always be, to be a countervailing force to counteract the inequality of bargaining power which is inherent and must be inherent in the employment relationship."

They went on further—actually it was the year before, 1997. Pardon me, that was 1989, so this would be eight years later. The Supreme Court reiterated its position in *Wallace and United Grain Growers*:

"The contract of employment has many characteristics that set it apart from the ordinary commercial contract. Individual employees on the whole lack both the bargaining power and the information necessary to achieve more favourable contract provisions than those offered by the employer.... This power imbalance is not limited to the employment contract itself, but informs virtually all facets of the employment relationship."

There is no equality. The average worker cannot just say, "No, I don't want to work any more overtime" with impunity. At the end of the day, this clause means there will probably be hundreds of thousands of people who will feel coerced or intimidated. Is that all employees? No, of course not. But what is intimidation? What is coercion? I would argue it affects different people differently.

Last night in this place during the debate on this bill, the member from Hamilton East walked across the floor and apparently stood in front of the desk of the member from Durham, John O'Toole, and I guess he was leaning over the desk. Let's keep in mind, in this place there are people guarding the doors right now at every outlet. This is just about the safest place in Ontario in terms of your own personal security. People aren't even allowed to walk on the floor of this place without permission. If somebody violates that, the escalation of what it takes to bring us back to only those who are allowed in here happens pretty quickly, up to and including bringing in the police and—I'd say to you, Speaker—at the end of the day bringing in the army. This place is about as safe as you're ever going to be as an individual, and yet last night what did Mr O'Toole say? This is from the draft Hansard last evening.

"On a point of order, Mr Speaker: When the Minister of Labour was addressing the House and a protest commenced, in that process the member for Hamilton East crossed the floor, approached my desk, and in fact was leaning on my desk in what I felt was a very intimidating fashion....

"Personally, I'm fairly uncomfortable with somebody being that aggressive. But I think it's completely out of order in this House for a member of the opposition to try and intimidate in a physical way."

And you're going to try to tell me there isn't going to be coercion and intimidation in the workplace by people who have no benefit of a union contract, no one there to represent their rights? At the very least they're going to be putting in jeopardy promotions, maybe better shifts, maybe better work, the opportunity for training. All those things are not going to be seen by the employer as a benefit they want to give to somebody who says, "No, I don't want to work overtime."

I would say—and it will come up during the rest of my comments—that in the other parts of this bill where you talk about mutual consent and agreement, the same argument I have made now and that others have made applies. There is no equality of power in the workplace. That's why we have to have laws. The fact that an Employment Standards Act exists is proof of that point. You're changing the law to allow an employer to have employees work up to 60 hours a week with no involvement of the government. They're all alone. That could be a young person, 17, 18 or 19 years old, maybe working in a summer job or maybe out in the workplace for the first time. Maybe it's a weekend job. How about the new Canadian who comes to this province and doesn't speak English as their first language, or just somebody who has to keep a job because they've got to put food on the table and also be able to keep a roof overhead for their kids? There are a lot of vulnerable people in this province, made more vulnerable by your laws, and this is another one.

I also want to address the issue of the permits, because that's the other argument where you are saying that what we're alleging here is not going to happen. Is the permit system flawed? Yes. Is eliminating the permit system the answer? No. You've done that on so many occasions with everything you've dealt with: health care, education, the environment, social services. You've identified a problem, which is easy. Nothing is perfect. There are always going to be areas—just about every area in government, as in private business, can be improved. To identify a problem alone and then say, "Therefore, we're taking action, and we're the good guys because we're the only ones who are doing anything," is nonsense.

When you eliminate the permit system, you eliminate any involvement of the government in the regulation of working 60 hours a week. Now, there are complaint procedures, and you're going to do your spot-checking—from what we can see, you're not even going to hire enough inspectors to replace the ones you've already fired. That's not the answer. The answer is to take a look at the permit system, identify what changes can be made so it's not just a rubber stamp—I don't argue that point. Yes, let's hear from employers. Have them come in. But because we're not having public hearings, that won't happen, will it?

What ought to happen is, we ought to have employers come in and talk about where the permit system is a problem, where there need to be changes from their point of view, and then bring in other experts in the field of labour law and ask them, "How can we keep and improve

a permit system that protects the most vulnerable and does not have negative implications for the employer, and how do we make sure the law is crafted in such a way that when it's implemented, it actually achieves what we want it to achieve?" That's what we ought to be doing here. Scrapping the permit system is a nice, easy way to turn your back on the most vulnerable in this province. I reject both those arguments totally: to say that with mutual consent and elimination of the permit system, somehow that's going to make everything OK.

1600

Now let's deal with this 60-hour workweek. The last time that the province of Ontario had reference to a 60-hour workweek was in a previous piece of legislation—I know the Tories love this; I'm surprised they don't call the Employment Standards Act this again, because this works for them real good—the Master and Servant Act of 1884 to 1944. That's the last time an Ontario statute spoke to 60 hours.

It's interesting. The only other country we could identify—and if you've got other examples, bring them on—at this time that's moving to a longer workweek is Russia. They've now introduced legislation, a new labour code, that opens up the possibility of a 56-hour workweek without overtime. Why are they doing it? Pressure from the International Monetary Fund. That's the world we've joined here in Ontario with this bill.

Just in October, the federal government and five provinces—and one of those is Quebec—every one of them said that 40 hours is the standard workweek. We don't have that in Ontario. People think that we have a 40-hour workweek in the province of Ontario. We do not. In the United States they have had a standard 40-hour workweek, where overtime is paid after 40 hours, since 1938. We're now making it easier for employers to force—I'll use the word "force"—employees to work up to 60 hours.

Why aren't you moving to 40 hours? In Europe they're moving closer to 35. You keep talking about competition. Here we've got provinces all around us, the federal labour code and European nations—some of our important trading partners—all going in the opposite direction. And the United States, our primary trading partner, has had that law since 1938. You've got us going the wrong way. You're not putting in the protection you say you are. You're leaving people vulnerable. Why? It's obvious. We know that it's easier and cheaper to have an employee work more overtime than it is to hire someone new.

One of the reasons the concept of time-and-a-half came into being, in part, was to recognize that after having worked a full day, if you're being asked to give that much more on a particular day, you should be getting a premium for that time-and-a-half. That certainly was part of the reason. But let me remind members of the government that the other main reason it was brought in was as a disincentive, so that employers would hire someone rather than have employees work longer hours. You're moving us away at a time when you've had more

money at your disposal in terms of discretionary funds than in the history of this province—billions of dollars. You've given it away to those who already have the most in our province.

If people are worried about what happens now during boom times when, yes, jobs are being generated, wait until we get into a recessionary mode. What's going to happen then, when people are terrified—even more terrified than they might be now—to put their job on the line? Who wants to go home and tell their kids and family, "I'm not working any more. There was a layoff and I don't have seniority because we don't have a collective agreement and I'm gone. I think it was because I said no to overtime in the past, when I wanted to be with the kids"?

You talk about volunteerism. When are they supposed to volunteer?

People shouldn't have to choose between their children and their job. For a party and a government that says they're family-oriented, family values, where's the family value in keeping people at work longer than they need to be or want to be, or having them make that horrible choice between my job and my children? They want to be involved in their hockey teams; they want to be involved in their concerts; they want to be involved in their children's lives. You say you want that and then you bring in legislation that ties them to work.

The next issue is very much linked to that, and that's this averaging. Part VIII, subsection 22(2): "Subject to the regulations, if the employee and the employer agree to do so"—here we go again; it's if there's agreement. They're going to stand up and say, "All they have to do is say no." That's what they're going to say. The government is going to say, "If somebody doesn't want to work these hours or they don't want to have their wages averaged, they just say no." I've already pointed out where that's not a defence for this kind of legislation.

Anyway, to put that on the record, "Subject to the regulations, if the employee and the employer agree to do so, the employee's hours of work may be averaged over a period of not more than four weeks for the purpose of determining the employee's entitlement, if any, to overtime pay."

What does that mean exactly? First, it means that if you work 40 hours one week, 40 hours the next, 56 the next and 40 the next, under existing legislation you would be entitled to overtime for those 12 hours in the 56-hour week you worked. That would be \$41 at minimum wage. Under your law, if someone says, "All right, I agree," it means they lose \$41 if they're paid at minimum wage, your minimum wage, which you've frozen for five years.

Another example: if you work 20 hours, 36 hours, 60 hours and 60 hours—the trigger point is 176 hours. If it's 176 hours or less averaged over four weeks, there's no overtime. If it's anything over 176, regardless of how it's bundled in those four weeks, then you're entitled to it. Our point is that if you're working 20 hours one week, 36 the next, 60 the third week and 60 the week after, you

ought to be entitled to the overtime for the 60 hours in the third week and the fourth week. If you were paid that, you would be receiving \$256 in earned overtime. Under your law, they don't get anything.

Another example, a four-week period: no hours the first week, 56 hours the second week, 60 hours the third week, 60 hours the fourth week. You'd be entitled, if you were earning the average pay, the average wage, to \$352 in overtime payments under existing legislation. Under your law, you'd get nothing. For those weeks when you worked 56 hours, 60 hours and 60 hours, you don't get any overtime.

1610

One has to ask oneself, if that's the case, why would anybody ever agree? I know the government says there are circumstances, and the Minister of Labour pointed them out, where there may be some benefit to an employee to have this opportunity to do that, and they really do understand all the implications and they want to work out some kind of an agreement. That doesn't need to be prohibited here. This is not about stopping people from having free will. It's a question of whether or not it really is free will. If the point is, "Nobody has to do that, so why would you worry about it?" I would ask, why would you put it in there? If common sense says that under the examples I've shown you, people end up working 60-hour workweeks and 56-hour workweeks and get absolutely no overtime, why would they accept this? Therefore, why would you even put it in if it's so ridiculous?

I come back to my original argument. You put it in there because you know the reality is that people will be threatened, that they will be coerced, that they will be intimidated, even if it's a simple thing like Mr O'Toole, MPP for Durham, feeling threatened by the fact that another MPP walks across the floor and stands at the front of his desk. That is legalized theft.

When someone gets hired, when you're anxious for a job, you really don't pay a lot of attention to the specifics or the details. You're so thrilled to finally have a job that you're thinking about that rather than everything that's being said to you. You're being told, "We have a policy here where there are occasions when we will ask you to work 60-hour workweeks and other occasions when we will ask you to average out your overtime, and we hope you'll be comfortable with that," and the person says yes, and then as things unfold and time goes on and the newness of the job wears off and they're approached to work these hours or under these conditions, they are reminded that they didn't think this was a problem when they were hired. "Are you not the employee we thought you were? Are you going to be a problem?" Suddenly you find yourself not getting the training you were getting, not getting the opportunity for better shifts as you accumulate some seniority; instead, quite the opposite.

Let me also point out that under this kind of four-week averaging, once you've got people committed to the point that they're going to buy into this out of fear for the

repercussions if they don't, if you've got a whole workforce in the same mindset, all you have to do is have your office manager or your administrator start scheduling things in such a way that on those weeks they need you to work fewer, those are the weeks you have other people working 54, 56 or 60 hours. As they get to the week where they have to work 10 or 15 hours to keep their numbers down, that's when you build up the employee's hours in that category. It's all about planning and it's very easy to hire someone and say, "Map it all out for me." At the end of the day, money that workers should be entitled to under the existing law is stolen from their pockets by the employer, and you sanctioned it.

The minister said yesterday, "Listen, people are going to break the law anyway and we're not governing for them. We're not governing for those who are going to break the law." Supposedly they're going to go after them, although they haven't got the staff to do it and I don't believe they even have the desire. You say you're going to go after them and therefore we shouldn't count those people. Let me tell you, that doesn't stop governments from bringing in laws to restrict anything, for that matter. You don't refuse to put up speed limits because you know there will be speeders who will violate the law; you put up speed limits based on what's in the best interests of the public and then you forcefully—as you flip-flopped on photo radar—enact legislation that allows you to uphold that legislation.

Those who have no intention of breaking the law: let's deal with that category. I'd like to think that's the majority. All you'd have to have is what we expect people to say. The owner or the ultimate manager of the establishment says to the managers or staff, "I want you to implement policies in this workplace that go right up to the edge of the law, no further, but no less." And you know what? At the end of the day, most of us would like to see a society that is built that way. If an employer wants to give more, or if a union comes in and they're forced to give more, all the better. But we do govern bringing in laws, hopefully, recognizing that in a law-abiding society people will abide by the law. It is under your law that people can have their wages stolen from them and that time with their families can be stolen from them. That's what is going to happen and you know it. At this point we don't have any evidence of any backbencher, anybody, who is going to say anything against this.

Do you know what? We won't know in a month or two months whether what I am saying is true or not in terms of the evidence of it. Unfortunately, it's going to take a long time for it to start to show itself and, by then, who knows how many people will have had money stolen from them, time stolen from them? Under this government, even if we could prove it, it doesn't look as if they would respond, because if they really cared about what was happening out there, they would give people a chance to have a say. If I am so wrong, then put it to the test. We will pass the parental leave legislation this afternoon, in a blink, and the rest of this bill can go to com-

mittee and then let's battle it out there. You're afraid to do that because you know your arguments won't sustain scrutiny, so within three or four days this is going to be law, just like that.

I've only got a few minutes left. I want to talk about the 10 days' unpaid leave. First of all, you make a wonderful argument why this should be in here, and we don't disagree. But why 50 employees? I understand the difficulty it places on employers with a small workforce. But again, it's not easy. Laws aren't just about identifying "Where are the angels sitting and there is where we'll legislate?" or "Where are the rights?" Most often it's a competition of rights, the rights of one group or individual versus another: Who decides and how do you decide? What are the criteria for decision-making?

You said, and we agreed, that when someone has a sick child they need to take to the emergency ward—goodness knows, they're going to be in that emergency ward for an awfully long time waiting for treatment because you hacked away at the health care system—on those times when they need to take their child to the emergency ward, they shouldn't have to put their job on the line. We agree. But if that priority, if that right is so important, then should there not be a recognition that it doesn't matter whether you're in a workplace of 50, 100, five or 20?

It comes down to rights and whose rights are paramount. Do you know what? In most cases, and I'll bet 10 times out of 10, if you ask any mom or any dad in the province of Ontario whether on the morning their child is sick and they have to take that child to the doctor or to the hospital they're giving any thought to whether they are in a place where there are 50 employees or more, or even if it means their job, they're going to say, "No, my child's welfare comes first." That's what we want and supposedly that's what you want.

Why are you expecting that a mom or a dad in a workplace of 25 people won't feel that way? Or if they will feel that way, that's just too bad, their job is on the line. Do you know what's going to happen? Most people are going to take that time anyway. Mom is going to take that baby, that child to the hospital whether it means her job is on the line or not, and you've offered no protection for that. That's wrong.

In this case, there ought not be a threshold. This is a human right, it's a parental right, and it's an obligation that we have to ensure that children are given the parents they deserve, and you're inhibiting that.

1620

There's one other section of this that's troublesome but, again, we're not going into committee so there's no way to know whether or not what I'm saying will actually carry out at the end of the day. We can only go by what's here. A lot of what's going to come eventually is in regulation, and we don't see those until after the bill is passed.

This says, in subsection 49(1), "An employee whose employer regularly employs 50 or more employees is entitled to a leave of absence without pay because of any of the following...."

I'm going to skip the first one and come back to it. There are three:

"2. The death, illness, injury or medical emergency of an individual described in subsection (2).

"3. An urgent matter that concerns an individual described in subsection (2)."

Subsection (2) outlines things like a parent, step-parent, a foster parent, a child, step-child, grandparent, spouse, relative of the employee who's dependent on you for all their care, and that's what we all thought this meant in the first place. But to take you back to number 1, it says: "A personal illness, injury or medical emergency."

Is this introducing a new 10-day threshold, or trying to, whereby after 10 days of someone being off sick they can be let go because they don't have permission? Why put it in there? Why put it in this category? Again, this is one where I'm not making a huge allegation that this is the way it will turn out; I'm raising a concern. This, from our point of view, shouldn't be in this category. There should be the paragraphs 2 and 3 that I mentioned, but why the first one?

We're not going to get any opportunity to talk about that, because we won't have public hearings. We can hear the government backbenchers. They'll maybe get a note sent to them from staff and they can provide some kind of answer, but at the end of the day that doesn't mean diddly-squat. The only thing that matters is what's in the law. There's a real concern about why you chose to inject that, and if you didn't mean for it to have the implications that I'm raising here, then why don't we take it out or why don't we talk about it?

Vacation pay—and I'm down to two minutes—part XI, section 33:

"The employer shall determine when an employee shall take his or her vacation, subject to the following rules....

"2. The vacation must be a two-week period or two periods of one week each"—and that's the current law—"unless the employee requests in writing that the vacation be taken in shorter periods and the employer agrees to that request."

Same argument, about how little intimidation it takes to have people fear for their jobs. What this means is that you don't get two weeks together; you don't even get one week together. You could end up taking your vacation one day at a time. If you refuse, there goes that training, there goes that better job, there goes that better shift, and maybe at the end of the day there goes your job.

Lunch is the same thing. I mean, there's just nothing about the workplace that is not dealt with in this law and in so many cases changed.

Part VII, subsection 17(2): "An employer may permit an employee to work up to a specified number of hours"—pardon me; that's the 60 hours—"if the employee agrees to work those hours." Then, if you don't have a paid lunch, it actually reads this way—subsection 20(2): "Subsection (1) does not apply if the employer and the employee agree"—this is that you get a half-hour

lunch—"whether or not in writing, that the employee is to be given two eating periods that together total at least 30 minutes in each consecutive five-hour period."

That means your whole lunch hour consists of 15 minutes here and 15 minutes there, and that doesn't even have to be in writing. There is so much to this bill that deserves to be looked at. It is anti-democratic, it is undemocratic, it's unacceptable that we're not being given a chance to debate this in legislative committees, where we can do the proper job that we should for the people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Questions and comments?

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): It's always a pleasure to reply to comments made by the member for Hamilton West, because he does bring some emotional rhetoric to this debate. There's no doubt he did point out—I made a few notes. He talks about there being an awful lot of rhetoric in this House. I must give him credit. He says that nothing is perfect, and I'm sure Bill 147, just like any other bill, is far from perfect. But he asked a question. He said, "How can the media let this go through? How come the public are not saying anything? The chamber is empty; there are a few people in the gallery. How come?" Maybe the media caught on that there's not that much to Bill 147. There are some revisions to the bill. The bill hasn't been revised for 25 years. It's a piece of legislation that was written in 1968, and times have changed. The workplace has changed; the types of jobs we do have changed. Consequently, of course we don't like change. I don't like change. I look in the mirror every morning and I see change. I don't like it. But it's a sad piece of reality: it is happening.

He talks about the permits, and he says people will be forced to work 60 hours. Of course, that's the rhetoric we're using. I'm glad to see that he mentioned that many people do not bother to apply for permits once they work over 48 hours, because that's the case; that is a fact. Consequently, that's a barrier we're trying to remove.

There's a lot of protection within the bill that will protect the workers. There's no doubt we can use the rhetoric to scare people. But he also mentioned one point that really caught my eye. He mentioned that if you lose your job because of seniority, it's difficult to go and tell your kids that you've lost your job. I would strongly suggest that it is sad, that for anyone to lose their job it's always difficult to go home, whether you're a union member, whether you've got seniority or not. It's very difficult—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I just want to begin by saying that any time I get to follow my illustrious colleague from Hamilton West it's a bit like dancing after Baryshnikov. I want to applaud him for his very thorough piece of work. I think the members opposite ought to listen to the very wise counsel.

The previous speaker made some reference to emotional rhetoric and the media. There's a difference

between the rhetorical and the prophetic, and I think the honourable member for Hamilton West was being quite prophetic in terms of identifying a number of concerns that he spots quite readily, even without the detailed examination in committee that this bill certainly deserves.

I have three teenage daughters, two of whom work in a couple of places. They like to make money; in the Christmas season, they even like the extra hours. I was particularly taken and pleased with the reference the member for Hamilton West made to how a number of people would get shafted as a result of some of the provisions in this bill. I can see the scheduling problems that he has outlined.

It's fortunate that my two girls work with progressive employers who, I suspect, at the end of the day will not be about the process of shafting their workers. But there aren't any guarantees that every employer out there is like that. I think the honourable member has made some comments that deserve to be explored in committee. I lament profoundly that we see this continuous pattern by this government of taking important legislation and being very dismissive of it.

1630

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The Minister of Consumer—no, Comsoc.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Consumer and Commercial Relations I would take, but I haven't been offered it yet.

I have a tremendous respect for the member opposite. I had the opportunity to work with him when I was parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour. We had a chance to attend a number of labour conventions and union meetings. I can tell the member for Hamilton West that I always got a decidedly more enthusiastic welcome than he did. Of course, that would depend on how you define "enthusiastic." It was certainly far more vocal and I got a lot more feedback from those meetings than he did.

But I do respect the honourable member. He cares passionately about these issues. I also disagree with him, but reasonable people can disagree. I would compliment the member opposite in one respect: he is very consistent. Since I've been in this place, he has consistently taken the same policy line since the day he was first elected. And that is different, because he is the only opposition party member we have that's consistent. I remember, in the election of 1995, fighting with the Liberals to repeal Bill 40. They wanted to scrap Bill 40. I remember going to those all-candidates meetings, and the Tories and the Liberals would be standing to try to scrap Bill 40. Only, when we brought in legislation to scrap Bill 40, the Liberals changed their minds on the unionization of the family farm. So I say to our friends Wayne Samuelson and others in the gallery that they certainly have a consistent friend in the member for Hamilton West.

The Minister of Labour has responded at great length to some of the criticisms made, so I won't repeat them. I do want to address the issue of public hearings that the

member opposite raised. He talked about the importance of process, the importance of public hearings, but this is a case of "Watch what I say, not what I do." When the member opposite was part of a majority government and part of the cabinet, Bob Rae and the NDP cabinet stripped hundreds of thousands of working men and women in this province of their collective agreements. They rammed through their social contract with how many days of public hearings? Nada. Nothing.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I rise to comment on the remarks of my colleague from Hamilton West. I would say that he has pointed out a very valid line of criticism of Bill 147. Certainly there are parts of the bill that are laudable, that we would support. It's long been the position of the Ontario Liberal Party that we should extend emergency family leave, to care for children, to care for parents. That was part of our platform. If the government has seen fit to lift good Liberal ideas, we want to stand up and recognize that. However, there are aspects of this legislation that are going to be detrimental to families, that are going to harm hard-working Ontario families.

Speaker, it's ironic. "Irony" is defined as the difference between appearance and reality, the difference between what is said and what is meant. You hear the Premier and others stand in their place time and again and say how they care about families, they care about the well-being of children and how they are raised. The single most critical factor in raising a family is making sure that you have parents there, that parents have time with their children to help to raise them. In this legislation, as the member from Hamilton West points out, a 60-hour workweek will cause parents to be at work instead of at home raising their children.

It is unprecedented anywhere to have these kinds of provisions embedded in law. It is anti-family, it is anti-children and it belies the rhetoric of the Premier and the cabinet. I would say it's a shame. It really is a shame. The irony drips in this legislation. They've held hostage some good Liberal ideas, but there are a number of bad ideas in Bill 147.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Christopherson: I want to thank my colleagues from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, the Minister of Community and Social Services and the member from Don Valley East for their comments and obviously for at least some attention to what I've said. I appreciate that. Thank you.

It's interesting that none of the government members, one of them being a cabinet minister, chose to challenge the allegations I put on the floor. I know the Minister of Labour disagrees with most, if not all, of what I said, but I would have thought that if I am so off the mark, that if some of the positions I have put forward—and they aren't rhetoric. I think anybody who listens or reads it will know that. If they felt that I was so far off the beam with what I was suggesting, those two members, one of them being a cabinet minister, would have gotten up and started to pick apart the arguments I made—at least one

of them. It didn't happen. We have no reason to believe, based on what the government just said in response to my remarks, that the concerns I have raised will not become reality.

Let me just say very specifically to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I deliberately raised the issue of nobody being here and that things being rammed through this Legislature was no longer news in Ontario because I knew what your response would be.

I want people who do care about this issue to understand that as long as you don't do anything about it, those are the arguments they can make; those are the arguments that carry the day. The only way we can stop that kind of argument is to show that you care. Be in this Legislature. Be out front. Get active. Something has to happen to stop this government.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I always enjoy listening to the member for Hamilton West because he always has a strong passion for his issues. On this issue, coming from Oshawa, it is particularly of concern how the legislation comes forward, the impact and the end result.

I must mention that I will be sharing my time, whatever time remains, with the member for Durham, Mr O'Toole, as he has some concern that he's not getting quite enough air time.

As well, I expressed my concern to the minister in that you may have noticed I wasn't here for the first vote on that. I expressed a concern that until we got some things clarified to the people in my riding, I wouldn't be supporting the bill. I can say now that we've had that resolved. I've had the Minister of Labour into the riding and we will be supporting the bill.

The member for Hamilton West spoke about people supporting it and, quite frankly, they constantly refer to our rich Tory friends. Well, in Oshawa my rich Tory friends are the average workers on the line. Those are the people I have the majority of associations with, before being elected and continuing today.

He touched on a number of issues that I'm going to try and briefly go over. I remember working in Toronto once for a company that was doing a major changeover. We were short-shipped some product from one of the Scandinavian countries so we were trying to do some modifications on the goods. The employer at that time made it very clear that I was going to be staying overnight. Well, the issue comes forward where those people are just going to say no. Quite frankly, I looked at him and I said, "Good night." I was still working there, and for five years after that I continued to be employed at that location, so there are opportunities. Yes, it can be intimidating and sometimes it is difficult to come forward in those positions and say you're not going to be put into pressure situations and to stand up for what you believe in, but sometimes you have to do that. I was an individual who specifically did that.

There are quite a number of issues regarding this. When we had the Minister of Labour into the riding, we

did a number of calls on the issue. We did over 100 phone calls. We contacted the local councillors. We contacted the CAW. We contacted the police association, the firefighters' association, the nurses' association, all the individuals. I know one of the key individuals who worked on the line had some strong concerns and wanted to come forward, because the perception they got from the union leadership was quite contradictory to what we were saying on that, so we brought the minister in.

Quite frankly, I was very disappointed. We got a number of responses. They said the hockey game was on and they couldn't attend. People didn't show up. I contacted people. There was one excuse that was rather—this is the follow-up to the member saying, "Where are the people in regard to the legislation?" The same thing took place in our town hall meeting. I was very disappointed at the total response. We had newspaper ads, we tried everything to get people out; we had commitments from people. Twenty-eight people showed up on the legislation. Some of the excuses I heard were that people had to go to Canadian Tire or they had to go to Home Depot. To think that in Oshawa, when you take out newspaper ads to discuss this legislation with the Minister of Labour and 28 people show up, it certainly says a lot about the concern about the legislation, or what people's perception of it is and where their priorities rank in different areas.

The only one that was very sincere was the fact that somebody had to get an MRI, so I gave my mother the OK to not be in attendance at that meeting.

1640

Quite a few things came forward at that meeting, and a lot of people learned that actually they were breaking the law already. Some people, for example, were taking holidays—in one place, when I was working in Toronto, Fred used to take Fridays and Mondays off every summer, all summer long so he'd have a four-day weekend. Fred suddenly, these people realized—not only Fred, but somebody else in attendance at the meeting realized that it was against the law for them to take a four-day weekend as opposed to taking a one-week block off. This was something that was quite surprising to them.

Not only that, but there were workers on a line there who brought the issue forward that a standard practice in General Motors is that you can work a double. That means you work your regular shift and then, if somebody doesn't show up for work, the group leader will ask the group if anybody wants to stay and work a double shift. They work a double. They go home for eight hours and then come back in. Quite frankly it's against the law, in that you have to have 11 consecutive hours off. So they were rather surprised at that. It was something that they would voluntarily do, and do fairly regularly.

As well, the chamber of commerce was invited to the meeting. One of the areas of concern was from a small business person who came forward who thought that the maternity leave being expanded to what we're expanding it to was going to cause some people to stop hiring females in child-bearing years, because all of a sudden

they're going to be granted this leave of 50 weeks. The minister quite amply answered the question, and actually the person came down, because they were an employer. I thought they were actually a worker on the line. This was an employer who came forward and said that they were very happy with the answer and that the minister would monitor to make sure that the demographics were not such that females in child-bearing years were going to be discriminated against because they might not be available for work for a 50-week period.

The member for Hamilton West spoke about being in an environment where people were going to be forced into work. Quite frankly, the average business owner is out there, yes, to make money. I don't know of a lot of businesses that are out there just to be a business and to provide work for people. The average person is out there to make money, and they do the best they can in those situations. Realistically, yes, the majority of business owners are people trying to comply with the laws, but there are a few bad apples out there. There are a few bad apples out there now, there were a few bad apples out there when the third party was in government, and there always will be. I would question whether those individuals want to be working in those locations at a time when there's prosperity out in the community, where we can look at other locations.

It's easy for an individual such as myself to stand up and say that, but when the people take a hard look at the choices they have out there that are available now, I think there are opportunities for other locations. The minister made it very clear that he was going to target those companies with substantial fines and they've been mentioned a couple of times here through the debate and, as well, there will be inspectors out there doing inspections of workplaces to make sure this happens.

The big issue was the concern that came forward about the 60 hours. I believe originally there were full-page ads in our local papers stating there was going to be a 70-hour workweek. The reality that the minister was able to calm the individual about was that the work permits were being moved from 48 to 60. What that means is that the individuals still have the opportunity to work the standard 44, with four hours overtime up to 48, and that they wouldn't be required to work a 60-hour workweek unless they so desired.

What do you do in situations of police, for example, or firefighters? Currently they have their shifts designed so that they can work specific hours, 10- and 12-hour shifts, and then they get extended periods of time off during that month. I know police officers, for example, regularly take four, five and six days off at a time in a one-month period because of the way the shifts are laid out. These are some of the flexibility things that make this legislation that much more attractive for people to get involved with.

As I was saying about the meeting in Oshawa—we had it at the Arts Resource Centre—we tried, to the best of our ability, to get as many people out as possible. We made hundreds of phone calls, all the municipal council-

lors, the regional councillors, the chamber of commerce, the downtown board of management, and we heard a lot of excuses. Quite frankly, my impression was that people weren't quite as interested as I thought they would be.

As a result of that—and I explained to the people there—I will be supporting the legislation. The individuals who did show up, I thanked them very much and appreciated that, and those who were unable to we've been able to provide with the information and the hand-outs that were available there. There were a lot of questions and answers mostly relating to their concerns, I would say, regarding the big issue, the 60 hours and how it came out to be. Where did the 60 come from?

Mr McMeekin: Did you make any changes as a result of their input?

Mr Ouellette: I don't believe so. The legislation came forward, and I think it was mostly an information session. The people were quite surprised that the information they were receiving was not quite the same as what they had received from the union leadership. So they had an opportunity to question the minister directly, and quite frankly they did.

I think there might be some other—the biggest concern is getting the facts out, so that the people have the opportunity to get the information they need. As I've stated, communication on the bill to the minister and others has not been what it should be.

With that, I think I'll conclude my remarks. I know Mr O'Toole certainly has a few remarks to make, as he always does.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I thank the member for Oshawa for sharing his time with me. Just picking up where he left off, it's really thanks to his efforts in organizing the meeting that the member for Peterborough and I sort of dovetailed to get the Minister of Labour out to Oshawa, to our area, to respond to real people and the genuine issues.

Like anything, I think there are two sides. Clearly, one side is getting information out. Some of it, I might say with your permission, Speaker, is not helpful. I would call it misinformation. On the other side there are good questions, and I think the member for Hamilton West probably brings out the most-developed arguments in terms of cautionary reminders. After all, I'd say the vast majority of us on this side are working people. I want to make it really clear that I'm not representing some elitist body here, and I think it's important to clarify the tension that's in the workplace.

The reality of this is that today we are very close to full employment. By any measure, roughly 4% unemployment is full employment, because there are a lot of reasons for transition in the workplace. We've heard recently from Mr Moffat and others from the skilled trades area, who are here today and who have been monitoring the debate during Bill 69. It's very robust. In the last few months, I was at a number of new school openings where they recognized the contractor and the skilled trades people for their contributions, and they were saying they could hardly keep up with the de-

mand—a new hospital, schools, a lot going on in the SuperBuild area with the colleges and universities expansion.

Bill 69 was one part of the changes in the labour relations climate. Another bill, Bill 139, the Labour Relations Amendment Act—we sort of call it democracy in the workplace. There are some controversial sections in there: the disclosure provisions and also the de-certification issues are clearly brand new. But even if I look at some of the leadership in the labour movement today, Buzz Hargrove, a very well respected individual, is saying they have to meet the challenge of the new workplace. Whether it's the e-commerce world or the global economy or the seven-days-a-week, 24-hours-a-day scenario, we have to somehow address it.

Most importantly, I think we must have fairness in the workplace. If I was to leave a message for anybody, whether they're working in a unionized workplace or a non-organized workplace, it's that we want fairness. I think what's happened today is the Employment Standards Act is being brought up to date, and that's the third piece that I want to spend a bit of time on, Bill 147.

The Employment Standards Act is sort of the benchmark. It's not the top, but it's certainly the minimum acceptable standards in unorganized workplaces, and hopefully good employers do reward employees. I think that's how you, to some extent, motivate people or recognize what people contribute in the workplace by a variety of methods and tools. Some of them are the tools that are in this bill. I think the member for Oshawa has very clearly addressed some of them and I think providing the employee and the employer with some new tools—as long as there's fairness. I think the member for Hamilton West says it best—I don't want to characterize every employer as being sort of a bad person. If they are, I believe they should bring the full force of the law to bear. Let's put it that way. I stand here today and say strongly that they should not be in this workplace. It's very difficult when you apply this whole equation to the global economy with outsourcing and resourcing and downsizing and a lot of things that just go into some kind of sweatshop offshore. I am not in support of any of that. I believe that the rising tide raises all boats. I hope that it helps all people, including organized and non-organized people, to get the best rewards.

1650

Also, the biggest one that I have had trouble with is the 60-hour piece. I was listening to a CBC program on the way in today, and on the program they were talking about active lifestyles. I don't want to be off topic here too much, but one of the callers called in and said, "People can't be active today because they're working all the time," and this caller quoted the 60 hours. In fact, I called the radio station to see if I could get her number. I've got to put this fire out. That 60 hours is an absolute—can I use it?—lie. Is that unparliamentary? I'll withdraw it.

But it is completely unacceptable. In the two-minute rebuttal—the member from Hamilton West is kind of the

definitive expert in labour theories right in here this afternoon because the Minister of Labour is not here, and I want him to respond to that specifically. That 60 hours must stop. It is only with respect to getting the permits. I want to put on the record that what the minister is saying in that whole thing is that the intent here is to make sure we don't spend all our time in the Ministry of Labour giving out permits to people to work overtime. In fact, I think what they should do is allow people to work when they want, provided they have protections.

I can tell you I've said clearly, let's take the 60 hours out of there. That's been my position, I should tell you, off the record—we're on the record now, I guess. What I've said is, let's just remove the permit process. Let's streamline that. Let's have a system where you log on and here's your 60 hours. I can tell you where I represent my riding, a lot of people, certainly when they were building the Darlington plant, worked around the clock when possible, provided safety was monitored properly in the workplace. I think that even the skilled tradespeople in the General Motors operations, when the money is there, certainly don't want somebody saying they can't get it.

So I think the 60 hours should be an agreement that it's only about the permits to work overtime. Overtime still starts legally after 44 hours. There are provisions with respect to averaging overtime. There are provisions with respect to time off in lieu. That's where I work 10 hours extra and I get time off; I get time and a half, and I get 15 hours off. That's clearly in here.

That whole thing of misleading the people watching today, it's important to realize that if you have a question, I would ask you—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): You can't accuse the opposition of misleading. You'll have to retract that. It's the second time you've done it this afternoon.

Mr O'Toole: I appreciate that and I withdraw that. I'd say be careful when someone tells you something that's wrong. How does that work? Is that working? Is that close?

The Acting Speaker: The ruling here is you can't say indirectly what you can't say directly.

Mr O'Toole: Phone my constituency office. If you have a problem, we'll sort it out for you, and there won't be any red tape involved like I'm finding here. I'm just trying to say that if you don't think you're being treated fairly, you can be assured that Mr Ouellette's office and mine are available. If I'm busy, I'll refer calls to his office.

We want to make sure that this whole thing is understood, that after 44 hours, you're entitled to overtime and if it's time off in lieu to help your family, to work in your community, to be a volunteer, to feel valued or whatever people need, I think that's the opportunity to make sure you get time and a half. Time and a half is what the rules say.

The Employment Standards Act is now addressing the new place of work. I think that 10 days off for emergency

leave is absolutely critical. I think matching the federal 52-week requirement for parental leave is absolutely critical. I commend the federal government for doing it. They do very little that I agree with, but this is the right thing to do, empowering people to make choices.

The question here is the unions themselves—they are needed and I wouldn't want to be off the record as saying they're not needed—have got to come into the new century. People who are working today are intelligent. For the most part, I believe that they are able to make decisions on their own. Workplace democracy, providing flexible tools under the Employment Standards Act, is exactly what is needed. The act hasn't been updated for 30 years. I can only speak for my constituents that the Employment Standards Act, in fact, is providing more tools for the employee and the employer in the workplace so they can adjust their lives in a very, very busy world.

I basically haven't covered much of what I wanted to talk about; the time has flown, because I've enjoyed myself addressing the people here this afternoon. Specifically, I would just like to put on the record here that the member from Guelph-Wellington hasn't said a word yet and I'm waiting for her two-minute response, and I'm not leaving until she gives it. Other members—the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has got the best speech I've ever heard. I've already read it and so—

The Acting Speaker: OK. Comments or questions?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I was monitoring the speeches that have just taken place in the assembly. I'm always worried when I hear the word "modernize," because when the government members talk about modernizing a piece of legislation, it usually means they're about to change it to favour those who contribute the most to the Conservative Party, that is, the wealthiest of the corporations and the most powerful of the people who fill the coffers of the Conservative Party at the huge dinners they hold that have these people gathered there. I've always said that you've caused a boom in building in Ontario because they have to build additions to these halls to have your fundraisers, which are successful, yes, in one sense, but certainly the pay-back is always there when you look at the legislation.

I guess I want to make two points. One is that our role and responsibility in this Legislature, it seems to me, a very important role we have, is to protect those who cannot protect themselves. My concern with the 60-hour workweek that you're talking about is that indeed there can be intimidation that takes place. I know you're going to tell me that things are booming today, and thanks to Bill Clinton and his administration—

Mr Caplan: And Paul Martin.

Mr Bradley: —and Paul Martin—things are booming here in Ontario. Nevertheless, if there is a downturn in the economy, watch employers start to squeeze people and put pressure on people. There is too much chance for intimidation allowed in this legislation. We have that responsibility to protect the most vulnerable.

When I hear the Minister of Community and Social Services say we have to drug-test anybody who is going

to receive social assistance benefits, I'm ready to throw up. This, again, is an opportunity that this government is taking to put the boots to the people at the lowest end of the echelon. That's who we should be protecting.

Mr Christopherson: It's interesting. The member for Durham focused much of his remarks on getting with it, talking about the new economy, the new workplace, the new century. Then he said the ESA, the Employment Standards Act, is just being brought up to date. If that's the case, I say respectfully to the member, if it's a question of the new economy and the new workplace, how about letting people who are the lowest paid in the province benefit from the modern-day economy? If you agree, then \$6.85 as the minimum wage ought not be acceptable to you. I'd like you to stand up and say something about that. Stand up and say that you think that minimum wage workers deserve to have their wages frozen since 1995 and then explain to them why it's OK for you and your colleagues to want a 42% increase.

The United States, since we last raised the minimum wage—which was under the NDP in 1995—have raised it twice. They are talking about raising it a third time. If worry about jobs is such a big deal, why would the economy that's driving our boom be OK to have raised it twice, and be on the brink of raising it a third time? That doesn't wash. The reason they don't want to do it is because it's a gift to their employer buddies. It's that simple.

1700

If you really wanted to modernize things, I say to the member for Durham, why aren't you prorating benefits for part-time workers? There are more part-time workers now than there have ever been in the province of Ontario, and you do nothing about that. Why not shorten the workweek to 40 hours, just like the rest of the progressive world?

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased to add my voice in support of Bill 147 and to respond to my colleagues who have been debating this bill this afternoon.

To my colleague across the way from the NDP, the reason a lot of us got into politics on this side of the House was because we were ordinary Ontarians not particularly intending to be politicians—actually at this point I'm not even comfortable with the word. We came here because we were Ontarians who could see that our wonderful province was in trouble, primarily because of the socialist policies that were invading the good work ethic and destroying the work ethic of this province. My constituents could see very clearly, in so many ways, what was going wrong. They didn't know the numbers, but they could feel those 10,000 jobs slipping away over those years. They could feel that sense of prosperity and of opportunity leaving them here in Ontario.

Mr Bradley, every day when he gets up and makes a comment, at some point refers to Ontario riding on the coattails of the United States. On many occasions different speakers on this side of the House have pointed out that, yes, we are related to the US economy in so

many ways—no one denies that—but Ontario is leading. It's not coming from us; it's coming from so many independent experts. One of the reasons that is occurring is because, as a government, we have strategically undertaken a number of initiatives to make Ontario open for business and able for entrepreneurs to thrive.

Labour legislation is key in this. I asked the Minister of Labour some questions in the House on this bill on November 28. I specifically asked him questions about the workweek. I specifically asked him to dispel that whole issue of the 60-hour workweek, which he did very clearly. I spoke to him about the two Blueprint promises we made, including the family leave crisis of 10 days, which we promised to voters in the election. It was clear. We're simply keeping the promises we made to the voters in 1999.

Mr McMeekin: I am delighted to rise and speak on this. I want to speak at the outset to the reference to the first update in 30 years. Perhaps there were things that needed to be looked at. One of my colleagues has made reference to some of the good things in the bill. There are some good things in the bill, it's not all bad, but in some significant ways it's omnibus legislation. Some of the good things that are there only get brought into being—

Mr Bradley: Hostages.

Mr McMeekin: Hostages is a better word—if we buy the bad parts. I think that's not only wrong, but a reason why this should go to committee.

The member opposite talks about tools. The simple reality of the situation is that the people in the labour movement today and people throughout Ontario don't believe you're moving forward with the right look in your eye. They simply don't trust this government. You're not about protecting workers. You're not about believing in those rights that unions fought for for a long time, at some considerable expense. You're not for unions. You're more for unions: you can peel it away, one level at a time, until there is nothing left.

We heard from the Minister of Labour the other day his en passant reference to union bosses as a way of adding a level of denigration to the discussion, and I frankly was disgusted with that outburst.

If the only tools you've got, I say to the honourable member for Durham, are hammers and screwdrivers, you know what happens to the people who are going to have to live with the results of the legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr O'Toole: The member from Oshawa and I will split the two minutes. It's pretty hard to split; it's like splitting hairs.

I'd like to thank the members from St Catharines, Hamilton West; the member for Guelph-Wellington, who has left; and the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, and welcome him to the Legislature. I think that was your maiden speech; it was a two-minute speech.

Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe it's improper for members to say that someone is

here or not in the chamber, and the member did that in his comments. He should withdraw that.

The Acting Speaker: Yes.

Mr O'Toole: I withdraw that.

I really did want to address the member for Guelph-Wellington as being—

Mr McMeekin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's clear that the member opposite hasn't had a chance to read the rules of conduct. I wonder if we can get him a copy of them.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. Go ahead.

Mr O'Toole: The member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot looks like those Christmas cards. I expect one from you. They are nice. Since that's your main occupation here, I hope you do it well.

With all respect, though, I think this debate on Bill 147 dispels some myths. Currently, one of the myths is that the government is imposing a 60-hour week. That's wrong, OK? Our province strongly protects the hours of work in the workplace and clearly overtime starts at 44 hours. The myth that employees will be forced to take vacation one day at a time is absolutely wrong, and people have to know that. I'm here to help them bring that forward. The myth that employees will be forced to sign agreements for excess hours of overtime—if there are problems in this area, I believe there's a process to challenge that. In fact, there is a reprisal portion in this legislation that has not been talked about. The penalties are absolutely severe. There are severe penalties for employers who actually take action against—in fact, they can repatriate the employee who has been suspended. Employers beware, because this law protects the employee more than you think. I think it's the right thing to do and I'll be supporting the bill, as I've explained today.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I'll be sharing my time with my colleague from the riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

I want to read into the record at the beginning a copy of a letter I received that was sent to Chris Stockwell, the minister.

"The changes to the labour regulations, Mr Stockwell, that you have proposed, are appalling. There were a few PC members that still had a bit of my respect but most of them have fallen by the wayside as they have sold their souls. You, Mr Stockwell, have joined them. Shame."

This is from Kathryn Gordyn in Strathroy, Ontario.

With this piece of legislation that we have in front of us today, what we should be seeing in this province is a government that's working at building and improving the infrastructure of this province, but we're not; we're seeing a government that's taking us backward. We've seen a government that's been taking us in the opposite direction since 1985. Look at what they've done to municipalities: reduced the number of municipalities, and the unprecedented downloading; the cuts that we've seen to the health care system in this province, the hospital

closures, the privatization of services, the unprecedented firing of nurses; education with fewer school boards, school closures and the constant attacks on teachers.

Now we look at this labour legislation. Let's just look at the labour legislation that we've dealt with this fall alone: Bill 69—

Mr O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to pass on my personal thanks to the member—

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Peters: I can guarantee you won't be getting a Christmas card from me, because I'm going to be sending them to my constituents. Nothing against you personally; nobody in here is going to, because I'm going to save the taxpayers some money.

Bill 69, Bill 139, Bill 147—these attacks have been unprecedented. It's very obvious what the hidden agenda of this government is and, more importantly, the agenda that's coming out of the centre. We know that the power and the control of this government doesn't lie in the backbenchers, because if the backbenchers would speak up we wouldn't have pieces of legislation like this in front of us today. We know what the goals are. Your goals are to undermine the labour union movement in this province. But it's also a direct threat to the non-unionized workers of this province, because as we all know, the Employment Standards Act, for those individuals who aren't part of a labour union and do not have a collective agreement behind them, is that collective agreement. This government is taking a direct assault at that.

The Harris government is taking Ontario backwards. Instead of trying to go forward, be progressive and look toward the 21st century, we're not seeing that happen. We're seeing a regression back to the Victorian age. Why doesn't the government look at what's happening in Europe, look at what's happening in other countries around the world and see the progressive labour changes that are taking place? But no, we're dealing with a government that's making changes based on a warped ideology that's not good for the workers and not good for the economy in this province.

1710

We need to look at what you've done. You've painted many of us into a corner. You constantly do that with legislation that you put forward where there are some good aspects in a piece of legislation, but unfortunately you cloud it with so many other legislative changes that one can't support it. The example I use that you're holding for hostage within this legislation is parental leave, which I'm sure, if put in front of this Legislature, would receive the unanimous support of this Legislature. But no, you've included that in with this legislation.

It's interesting, as you read through this legislation, that this term "voluntary" constantly appears. Voluntarily isn't always the best way to do things. Things need to be clear, because when you leave it as a vague term like "voluntary," it's not clear to the worker; it's not clear to the employer. I think you're doing a true disservice to the people of Ontario with this legislation.

Dealing with the 60-hour workweek, the government should recognize that the "optional" criterion is of little value in the workplace, especially among low-wage or minimum-wage workers. Employers have the weight of authority behind them. Employees, as a counterbalance, need the weight of good law. But under the proposed scheme, employees who refuse to offer to work 60 hours might find that their career prospects are limited or, even worse, non-existent.

What's especially sad is that this is true, I believe, for young workers and recent immigrants. We can see the situation where employers will significantly roll back their efforts to recruit, hire and train more workers. Instead, employers can simply stretch their existing workforce to capacity. We know the damage that's going to do to family time. Are you, at the same time, funding daycare? Are you pumping more money into daycare to allow for somebody who's going to have to work extra time? Are you going to fund daycare to ensure that daycare is working longer hours? There's been no evidence of that. What that's going to do is put more of a strain on the family, whether that's the immediate family or the extended family.

I think too that you need to look at what's included in this legislation regarding overtime. Overtime should not be averaged out over several weeks, because employees are going to lose out on valuable pay for their work. Second, as the 60-hour maximum could be spread out unevenly over three weeks, a worker's schedule can be sporadic and detrimental to their day-to-day lives.

Daily vacation time does nothing to improve the health and productivity of a worker. Workers need to have downtime from their jobs. Unfortunately, the proposal we're dealing with here in this legislation erodes the time that an employee can have to look forward to in order to spend time with the children in summer. Complete breaks from the workforce are often what are needed to rejuvenate workers in this province.

I want to read from another letter I received from a constituent, Gale Maurer. "Yes, I understand you think that the 60-hour workweek will be a written agreement between an employer and employee, but you have not taken into consideration the fact that the people who are least able to negotiate because of lack of education, job skills or union protection are the people who will be most affected. The minimum-wage earner will be given a choice: sign the agreement to average your overtime over a four-week period or get yourself another job."

This constituent goes on to say, "I find it unconscionable that someone who was elected by the people to represent them should propose such a law as the Employment Standards Act, 2000. This act will not benefit employees; it will only benefit employers. I hope you come to your senses and stop this act before it becomes law."

There are over a million workplaces in this province, but the government has no teeth left for the protection of workers from bad employers. We've seen in your goals to cut spending that you've cut the budget by over 50%

over the past five years. We've seen the employment standards officers in this province cut by over 30%. Whether it's Bill 69 or Bill 139 or Bill 147, they're being rammed through this Legislature, not in the democratic fashion that we've all been elected to do, but they're being rammed through. But worse yet, they're being rammed through with no public consultation, no opportunity for committee meetings.

This is what we as elected officials do. We bring legislation forward, but we are only 103. We need to have input from other citizens in this province, but this government has effectively shut that out. Legislation and labour relations are all about balance, but unfortunately the scales are not balanced in favour of employees in this province, they're balanced in favour of the employers.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I want to pick up where my friend from St Thomas left off. Let's not kid ourselves, the Employment Standard Act is a major piece of legislation that is most important to those—what?—four million or five million unorganized workers in the province of Ontario. Many of those people are in low-wage positions. So we are talking about legislation that is absolutely central to the way in which millions of people, many of whom are at the lower end of the economic scale, are regulated in the province of Ontario. I think we have to be frank about that.

I hear my friends opposite, and I want to say the speeches this afternoon have been quite good. I thought the member for Oshawa was particularly telling on a number of points. Earlier today the member from Kitchener made the point that we are in an economy where in a number of places, and certainly in Ottawa-Carleton and Waterloo region and certainly much of the GTA, we are very close to full employment. These are very good times, and we have more opportunity in the labour force than we've seen in a long time. Hopefully that condition will never change; history tells us it probably will.

But as Mr Peters indicated a moment ago, good labour relations are about fairness and balance. What kind of fairness and balance is there in Bill 147 for that single mother who might be working in an unorganized workplace in Ontario for minimum wage? What kind of negotiating power does she have with, let us say for the sake of argument, an unscrupulous employer?

Mr McMeekin: And there are some.

Mr Conway: And there are some. There are some very good employers, but there are some bad cats out there as well. You don't have to be very creative to imagine how this voluntary scheme that is at the core of the contentious provisions around overtime hours of work and vacation time could work to the disadvantage of that Ontario worker.

I say to my friends in the government, surely we want to have true fairness in the workplace. I've had a number of representations from my constituents who are very concerned about the 60-hour workweek, about the so-called averaging of overtime. They tell me that it is their experience that it's probably not going to work to their, the workers', advantage. I suspect they're right.

1720

To be fair, my constituents have told me that the improved maternity leave provisions are very much to their liking, and I think the House is unanimous in its support for those provisions. As has been said by a number of people here today, Bill 147 is not all bad. But there are aspects of it that are, I think, really unfortunate and ought not to be supported by any fair-minded individual.

Again, we are told by members of the government, "Not to worry, there are stiff fines and there is going to be rigorous enforcement." Do any of us really believe that? I am very dubious. I hear from good people working in the public service who have current enforcement functions that they are simply beleaguered. Whether they're at the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Labour or elsewhere, they are completely overwhelmed. They simply do not have the resources, they tell me, to do a very good job. It will be interesting to see what we find out when the O'Connor judicial inquiry into the Walkerton case is completed.

I can tell you from my experience in eastern Ontario, I've heard some cases in the last few years that really trouble me about what's not being done to enforce the law of the land as it's currently written, whether it has to do with environmental protection or issues in the workplace. But I ask honourable members, fair-minded people all, do any of you really think that this so-called principle of voluntarism is going to protect low-paid, unorganized workers? I don't, and I don't believe in the tooth fairy either. I think our friends in the labour movement and our constituents are right to say, "Hold the phone. Stop and seriously think before you take these steps."

There is a good body of academic literature that ought to warn us about people working too long. I think every member of this Legislature would understand the pressures to work beyond a reasonable amount of time. We are, of course, all volunteers to the cause, but I can tell you there are examples in this business of people who probably shouldn't have been working when they were working and some sad results ensued. But I just have to say that the process is a valid concern.

I think the member for Oshawa makes a good point. I was listening carefully to what he said. He brought the minister out to his part of Durham region, advertised a meeting and there wasn't a very good attendance. That ought to give us some pause. But I have to tell you that if we have reached a point in the history of this Legislature where we are not willing to take legislation of the kind contained in this proposal, these amendments to the Employment Standards Act, to a reasonable public hearings process, then we fail in our obligations to the public. There may be a good argument as to how much and how far and for how long; that I understand. I've been a government House leader, and I can understand the frustration of government with an endless belt of public hearings. To govern is to decide. But that we are going to have, as somebody said here the other night, public

hearings on snowmobile matters and no public hearings on fundamental changes to the way in which the workplace is organized, particularly for unorganized individuals, is nonsense on stilts. It makes me ask the question, why would we not have hearings?

I'm going to say something that is not very kind but I'm beginning to believe it. I said it the other night with the assessment bill, Bill 140. I'm really getting to believe that this Legislature is only getting, and getting for a rather brief time, very important legislation like Bill 147, like Bill 140, after and only after those bills have been worked up and worked over by some very well-funded special interests very close to government who have got the clout and the financial capacity to get and keep the ear of government.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Don Smith.

Mr Conway: The member from Scarborough says Don Smith. Maybe Don Smith is involved in this; I don't know. But I say this: our system of parliamentary government works when people think it is reasonably fair, and there is a willingness of the governed to accept the sometimes tough decision-making of government if the citizenry, if the governed, honestly believe that the governing are being fair and even-handed. Part of that fairness is opening the door of opportunity so people, in this case in the labour movement and elsewhere, who have a very strong feeling about this legislation get a reasonable opportunity in a fair and open parliamentary environment to have their say. That is increasingly not the case.

I say to my friends in the government, if this continues you and we as a parliamentary collective run the risk of telling people, "The system's rigged against you. There isn't fairness. Go elsewhere. Don't waste your time playing those parliamentary games, because they're not interested. Go and develop extra-parliamentary activities," and some of those can be very interesting and not very pleasant for government or for Parliament.

We're here because we've decided as a society that there are conflicting interests that we have to balance, and no conflict is greater and more fundamental than the conflict between labour and capital, between employer and employee. We are undertaking in this legislation and in other collateral bills very significant changes to that balance. In my view, we are tilting the balance unduly in favour of capital and in favour of the employer and the employer groups. I think that's a very dangerous, illiberal thing to do, and we are taking procedural measures to reinforce that bias and that prejudice. I think a progressive, fair-minded Ontario does that at its peril and to its economic and social detriment.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Christopherson: It's always an enjoyable moment, to listen to the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke speak.

First of all, I'd like to bring to the attention of the House that the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, Wayne Samuelson, is present. Obviously, given that most of the discussion here today—and the member

from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has also commented—deals directly with people who don't have benefit of a union, I think it says an awful lot about the labour movement that the president of the Ontario federation is here, because they have concerns. In fact, there's a slogan that's been used, and I'm paraphrasing, but it's, "The weekend—brought to you by the labour movement." So anyone who thinks that the organized labour movement is only concerned about collective agreements and union members misses the fact and the point that much of what was in the Employment Standards Act now is as a result of the efforts of the organized labour movement, not just on behalf of their own members, but on behalf of all workers, because without them there is no other voice out there.

I raise that because the member said that we're getting to the point where people are working too long. I want to bring to your attention, because there wasn't enough time in what I was given to speak to, that part VII, section 18(4) says this: "An employer shall give an employee a period free from the performance of active duties equal to"—this is a day off—

"(a) at least 24 consecutive hours in every workweek," which we had before under the previous legislation; that's now gone and it's replaced with a second clause that says, "or (b) at least 48 consecutive hours in every period of two consecutive workweeks."

That means you've got to work two weeks before you get a day off under this Tory law.

Mr O'Toole: I'm very pleased and respectful to respond to the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, whom I have a lot of respect for. In his deliberations, he said his call was basically for public hearings.

It should be on the record that there was a discussion paper out in early summer, and the minister is clearly on record as having consulted, not just in Oshawa and down in the Sarnia-Lambton area, but indeed in London and other major centres. In fact, this issue has been out there in terms of the three different bills I mentioned earlier. Back in the previous government, in the 36th Parliament, the Employment Standards Act was looked at then. There were a number of aspects of the Employment Standards Act that I was part of in 1996. There were public hearings as part of that as well. So this is not a new topic. It's something it takes a great deal of political will to deal with.

It's important for the public to get the facts, and I want to put on the record the whole issue of some of the myths on overtime.

The fact is that overtime should be paid after 44 hours per week. What needs to be clarified is that overtime averaging is not new. The ability of the employers and the employees to agree for their own specific reasons to averaging overtime has existed since 1968. Employees working in nuclear plants, hospitals, manufacturing, automotive and IT industries already are familiar with averaging. The rubber workers in my plant already have continental shifts. Not that I agree or disagree; the point is that they have the ability to adjust their workplace.

Many provinces—nurses, security, maintenance employees, software designers, miners, to name a few—average overtime to facilitate compressed workweek schedules.

The point is that the world of work is changing. It's time we updated the Employment Standards Act.

1730

Mr Caplan: I congratulate both the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London and the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for their comments. Following the last speaker who was commenting, it is clear that Frank Sheehan is the Minister of Labour of Ontario. This stuff has been out there? You bet it's been out there, along with a whole bunch of other proposals that do nothing to enhance the rights of the people in Ontario who need them most. Five million Ontarians are governed by this act.

Look at what has happened. We are weakening the laws to allow people to organize themselves. The Harris government is trying to actively discourage people from gathering in a collective to bargain their rights. Now, for those who are not organized, we're going to really whack it to you. On the one hand we make it harder; on the other hand, look at what we're going to do to you if you're not organized.

The members are quite right when they point out that there are laudable things in the legislation, positions that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party have supported. We called on the government years ago to extend emergency family leave to care for children, for parents, for relatives. We're glad to see it's in the bill. Obviously we would support that kind of measure. We support extending parental leave. We think it's important. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal caucus believe that family time—parents should help and be there to raise their children. We should not be putting a stumbling block in the way of those hard-working Ontario families.

But the other measures in Bill 147 create this conundrum, create this contradiction. Shame on the government for trying to confuse and trying to slide in these devious kinds of measures.

The Acting Speaker: Further comments or questions?

Mr Beaubien: Thank you, Speaker, for the time to speak on Bill 147, the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

Why are we making changes to this act?

The Acting Speaker: We're doing two-minute comments.

Mr Beaubien: Oh, we're doing the two minutes. I'm sorry. I'll let my colleague—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is a pleasure to take part in the debate this afternoon in response to the speakers from Elgin-Middlesex-London, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Hamilton West, Durham and Don Valley East.

Unlike many career politicians who might have been here a long time—I'm not sure what else they did in their earlier lives—I come from a background of practicality,

of having worked in the workplace. I mentioned earlier that I was at Stelco, and many other fine places. They were union and they were non-union, and the union got decertified and everything else. So I bring a lot of practical experience in that sense.

I remember very clearly this permit situation where, whenever you needed even a slight deviance, because in the working world, as you would know, Mr Speaker, from time to time you need some overtime, you need people to work extra overtime, the law stated that you must get a permit from the ministry, even during the NDP's time and in fact in our time. As many as 18,000 permits were issued. That basically means about 90 permits a day. You have a whole department issuing these permits.

Let me sort of remove the myth that because of this new law that may come into force, if passed, everybody will have to work 60 hours a week. That is not the case. What we're trying to do is cut out the red tape. We're saying the employee and employer can make their own decisions. The power should be vested in them, and they should be making these decisions.

There are many good things, as the member from Don Valley East mentioned. The 10 unpaid days of family crisis leave will eliminate the so-called planned sickness days. It is going to give people the right to take that leave, because there are family crises that come up.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Conway: I'd like to respond to a couple of points made, particularly by the member from Durham. Yes, I accept that the workforce is changing. It was interesting: I was reading a review of a new book about Silicon Valley in California. It's a wonderful book with a great title, *The Nudist on the Late Shift*. It does make the point about how remarkable and exotic the workplace is getting in some of the "new economy places."

I am the first to understand there are changes and that we're going to have to adapt to them. I also listened to what Mr O'Toole said about what's been going on in the nuclear industry and in hospitals. Well, of course. Those are big, largely unionized workplaces. As long as there's a collective agreement, then I've got some greater comfort that there's going to be a fair arbitration of the competing interests.

My concern, and the concern of many of my constituents who have written to me about the changes in Bill 147, is that we're talking about largely unorganized workers, many of whom are at the lower end of wage scale. What kind of protection will there be for those people? I asked earlier, do you really think the voluntary principle is going to be adequate to protect from the attitudes of an unscrupulous employer that minimum-wage single mother who at 29 is out there working? I don't think so.

If I felt that unorganized, low-paid worker, whether she be in the Ottawa Valley, in metropolitan Toronto or elsewhere, would have the kind of protection she might get at an organized nuclear power station workplace, then I'd feel a lot more comfortable. But because we are

dealing with large numbers of unorganized, low-paid people, I simply can't accept the naive belief that some kind of voluntary principle is going to produce a private and a public good in this matter.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Beaubien: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 147, which is the—

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. Just give me a second.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her chambers.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

Bill 119, An Act to reduce red tape, to promote good government through better management of Ministries and agencies and to improve customer service by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts / *Projet de loi 119, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives, à promouvoir un bon gouvernement par une meilleure gestion des ministères et organismes et à améliorer le service à la clientèle en modifiant ou abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant deux nouvelles lois.*

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ACT, 2000 (continued)

LOI DE 2000 SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (suite)

The Acting Speaker: Now the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mr Beaubien: I'll try again. It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak on Bill 147.

The question that begs to be asked is, why are we making changes? This particular act was proclaimed in 1968, and there have been no major changes to it in the past 25 years. There's no doubt the work we do today has changed, and so too have society and familial relationships and obligations. I think we have to look at and cater to the needs of the 21st century.

Before I start, I would like to read a few items into the record. One is from Hansard last night. Referring to the Minister of Labour, the member from Hamilton West said, "To his credit, he did issue a white paper. To his credit, he did travel around the province and invite people to make comments on the white paper. But there is a world of difference between inviting someone to come into a meeting that is controlled by the minister and his or her staff to comment on a discussion paper about what you might or might not do and what people think about it versus proper legislative hearings."

1740

Also, a week ago I was informed by some of the members of the local union in the Sarnia-Lambton area—because some of them still vote for me and still supported me in the last election, even though the union did not support me financially. They did support my opponents in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and in the Sarnia-Lambton area. On the one side they were successful; on the other they weren't, and those are the facts of life and we have to live with it. So if we talk about large corporations supporting members on this side of the House, I guess that is a fact, although I don't get an awful lot of support from the Ellis-Dons and the large corporations of the world, but I'm sure that many members on the other side of the House, and probably on this side of the House at times, do get funding from unions. That is the democratic process today.

When I was informed by a couple of business agents that some of their members wanted to picket my constituency office last week, I met with two of the business agents a week ago this past Saturday. I offered to them that it might be more constructive if I were to invite the Minister of Labour to come and talk to the members, as opposed to having a picket around my constituency office. The business agents realized that it might make a little bit of sense, and consequently I made arrangements. I would like to thank the Minister of Labour publicly for coming to the Sarnia-Lambton area last Friday; namely, to Point Edward. There is no doubt that, unlike my colleague from Oshawa who had only 28 members, our meeting was very well supported. We had approximately 700 people and there is no doubt that it was an interesting meeting.

I would like to quote the editorial that appeared in the Sarnia paper on December 4. I will read it into the record. The title says "Visiting Sarnia to Get Shouted At." I would like to correct the title, because it was "Visiting Point Edward to Get Shouted At" for the people of Point Edward, although they're not in my riding. It says:

"Credit goes to Ontario Labour Minister Chris Stockwell for his Friday venture to Sarnia to meet with unionized construction workers about proposed changes to labour laws.

"As could be predicted, an angry group pounced on him. In the resulting exchange, no compromise solutions or modifications to the legislation were arranged. But both sides probably knew no concrete results would emerge.

"It is admirable Stockwell bothered to come. On the minister's schedule, the appointment in Sarnia was likely listed as 'Go to Sarnia to get shouted down.'

"But he got to say his piece, as did angry construction workers who saw a man they believe is tearing down the system that provides them with their living.

"The two sides are dug in.

"Stockwell was certain more construction jobs will be created due to the changes. Union leaders are convinced their members will suffer.

"While the meeting was a stalemate for both sides, the difference is that Stockwell can return to Queen's Park and ensure that the government's side becomes law, while construction unions are left to fume.

"It's not an easy issue to explain clearly to people outside the industry so the general public is left with general statements. Without explanations pro and con, there is no way to judge the issue objectively.

"It will be law and it could be years before people outside the construction business are able to see if the government's move was good or bad for all Ontario residents.

"In the meantime, it must be remembered that Stockwell walked into Sarnia likely knowing it would be a fruitless confrontation. But he didn't back away.

"People saw him and despite their inability to bring him away around to their point of view, he heard it. He knows local unions have rejected the government's ideas.

"Usually under such circumstances, people have to hunt politicians down and use a few seconds to voice their anger. Usually it's a cabinet minister who is jumping into a waiting car and the crowd is left standing in the dust yelling at a car that is driving away.

"On Friday, workers had their chance to speak their mind, thanks to Stockwell's willingness to take a verbal beating."

I certainly commend the minister because he did not have any problem explaining the reasons why we're introducing this legislation.

The sad part I found about the whole discussion was that nobody had bothered to read the bill. You have a brother questioning the minister as to why he flew to Sarnia, why he wouldn't ride in his car? The minister was in Oshawa the night before. He has a family and we've heard that family responsibilities are very important and I concur with that. Then a brother starts questioning, "Why is the minister flying to Sarnia?" What do we expect the minister to do, ride his bike? He does have a life. Consequently, the sad part is that nobody bothered to read the bill. The business agents I met had not read the bill.

Furthermore, another issue I would like to get on the record is that on December 5—I don't know what time but it was in the morning—the Ontario Federation of Labour took over the Minister of Labour's constituency office. Employees felt intimidated. Employees were told to shut down their computers. "Lock your files. No more work is going to get done here today." Is this what you call democracy? I concur with the member for Hamilton West when he says people might be intimidated by employers and that is not acceptable. I am 150% in agreement with the member when he says that. But it is not acceptable when we reverse the tide. I don't think it's acceptable to see the union walk into a constituency office, take it over and tell people, "Nothing is going to get done and we're going to intimidate you." I don't think that's acceptable.

I am appreciative of the comments made by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke because he is

a balanced, reasonable individual. I agree with him that it is always difficult to find the perfect balance in any legislation. In labour legislation it's probably even more difficult, because we deal with personalities, with emotional, passionate issues, and there is no doubt that at times it is confrontational. It's been like this for a number of years. I would like to see a change, but it's going to be difficult to change.

For the past five years, when we talk about this government, I've heard that the sky is going to fall in. I keep hearing that. Last night I went for a pleasant walk at about 9 o'clock. The sky was still there. The sky was falling in, but it was snow coming down and it was quite pleasant. I'm sure tomorrow morning we will all, hopefully, rise and the sky will still be there. I'm sure once this legislation is passed the sky will still be there.

Let's talk about the bill a little bit. There are some issues in the bill that cause some concern for some people, and in some cases rightly so I think. We have to provide some type of balance.

When we look at the hours of work, there has been an awful lot of discussion. It's easy to raise the level of emotion and say, "You're going to be forced to work 60 hours." I asked the business agents when I met with them a week ago Saturday, "How many of your members worked over 48 hours in the past year?" "All kinds of them." I said, "How many permits did you get?" "Oh, we don't bother getting permits any more." That's what we're doing. For the people who are going to be working between 48 and 60 hours, you're not going to need a permit, but if you're going to work over 60 hours and it's agreeable to the employer and the employee, which is very important—there should be no intimidation in that process—a permit will have to be issued.

With regard to overtime, there is no doubt that on the overtime averaging arrangement, you can spin that whichever way you want to do it, but if you read the legislation, if you read the bill itself, there are protection guidelines for the people.

When we talk about vacation and public holidays, it has been perceived that people are going to be forced to take their holidays one day at a time. If we look at the legislation, it's quite clear that is not the case. If the employee wants to do that, he is well within his rights to do that, but if he or she decides they want to take their holidays in one-week increments, that is the law.

1750

With regard to family crisis leave, we never hear too much about that because, as the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke mentioned, I think we can all agree with that: to take 10 unpaid days with regard to family emergencies or whatever the case may be. I think that's coming into the 21st century. Maybe it was not acceptable when the bill was written, in the 1960s, but it's acceptable by today's society. We expect that. I don't think there's anything wrong and I'm glad to see that the opposition is supporting this part of the bill.

With regard to enforcing fines, as the minister pointed out last night, there are going to be more people en-

forcing the legislation. There's going to be more power for these people to deal with people who contravene the legislation. So is it going to be perfect? No. Because as I pointed out before, I don't think there is a perfect situation. However, we have to try to manage the risk. We have to lower the risk of people taking advantage of it.

I'd like to refer to Bill 147, part VI. It says:

"Records

"15(1) An employer shall record the following information with respect to each employee, including an employee who is a homeworker:

"1. The employee's name and address.

"2. The employee's date of birth, if the employee is a student and under 18 years of age.

"3. The date on which the employee began his or her employment.

"4. The number of hours the employee worked in each day and each week.

"5. The information contained in each written statement given to the employee under subsection 12(1) and clause 35(3)(b).

"6. All vacation time taken by the employee."

So again we can take the bill and somebody can give you some type of interpretation. But I'm not a lawyer; many of us are not. I think when you look at this particular section it's fairly concise; it's fairly clear. But there's no doubt that you can put a spin on it. I'm not going to argue that point. There's no doubt about that.

Let's talk about part VII. It says:

"Hours of Work and Eating Periods

"17(1) Subject to subsection (2), no employer shall require or permit an employee to work more than,

"(a) eight hours in a day or, if the employee has a regular work day and it is more than eight hours, the number of hours in his or her regular work day; or

"(b) 48 hours in a work week."

It goes on and explains it so that nobody—the spin out there is that you're going to be forced to work more than 48 hours. It's right there. Part VII, clause 17(1)(b), is clear.

The other thing I heard last night was the member for Hamilton West talking about the minimum wage. You know, I concur with him that the minimum wage at \$6.85 is not adequate, but I'm sure that in 1980, or whenever it was, when it was \$3.25, or whatever, it was not adequate. The minimum wage is never adequate. But as a government we believe it's better to make \$6.85 and be able to take \$6.85 than to make \$15 an hour as a minimum wage whereby the government comes in and sucks \$9 out of it in taxes and leaves you with \$6.

Furthermore, for people who are disadvantaged—and I think if you're making \$6.85 an hour today you're probably financially disadvantaged—we do have a winter clothing and back-to-school allowance for some people; we do have GST credits; we do have child tax benefits; we do have provincial property and sales tax credits. So there are safeguards provided by the government to help prop up these individuals. If I were to ask, "Would \$9 be

adequate as a minimum wage?" the answer would be, "Probably not, because it would be very difficult to live on that." What our government has been doing in the past five years is, instead of raising taxes, we have been cutting taxes. We've had 166 tax cuts in the past five years. I firmly believe, as a former businessperson, it's not what you make that is important; it's what you get to keep in your wallet at the end of the month. Like I said, I'd rather make \$6.85 and keep it all, as opposed to making \$15 an hour, whereby the people on the other side would like to take \$9 and claw you back to \$6. Are we better off? I don't think so. If we look at what happened, the former government increased the minimum wage. They did. But what was happening? We had the highest unemployment, probably, in the province of Ontario in decades—the highest. We had the highest welfare rate in Canada. Can you believe Ontario having 11% to 12% of their population on welfare? Can you believe that? That is unbelievable. It is unbelievable that we would see fit to promote that type of philosophy, that type of ideology, that type of politics.

Last night the Minister of Labour mentioned that under this bill, the Employment Standards Act, 24 sectors aren't even covered. We never hear that from the other side. Some of the sectors are—I'll quote him: "the hospitality sector, the trucking industry, the hospital sector, nuclear plants, manufacturing, mining—all kinds." He goes on to say, "We also have a study that says that only one third of the employers and employees out there who work more than 48 hours actually go and get a permit." That's the Minister of Labour. The busi-

ness agents in the Sarnia area confirm that "We don't bother getting permits any more, because it's too time-consuming and there's no point getting them."

The minister also said last night, "What we said to the members opposite is rather than simply writing in meaningless words, we need to put some money and inspectors behind our decision. We committed to increasing the inspection staff by 20%; we're adding 20% more inspectors under this bill than we had. But more importantly, we're doing something that is much better. We're giving power to the inspectors, something these other"—that's the end of the quote.

There's no doubt that whenever you introduce a bill, debate will occur, because that's the political process. But I think sometimes it would be nice for some of the people who have concerns with regard to the bill, especially people who are in responsible positions, people who represent their workforce—I think there would be an awful lot of merit if these people had read the bill so they could explain some of the situations or some of the legislation that is in the bill, as opposed to having a whole bunch of rumours that are running rampant, that in many cases, I would strongly suggest, are not factual.

The Acting Speaker: If the member returns the next time this bill is called, we'll do the questions and comments. If not, we'll move on to further debate.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
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First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
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**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 6 December 2000

Mercredi 6 décembre 2000

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Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 décembre 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall continue to meet until Thursday, December 21, 2000, at the end of which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House until the next sessional day.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of the House to allow the official opposition to stand down its leadoff hour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Member Caplan requests unanimous consent that his party stand down. Agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Baird moves government notice of motion number 81. To lead off debate, the Chair recognizes the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Mr Baird: This is a routine procedural motion, and in the debate I would like to share my time with the hard-working member for Guelph-Wellington and the hard-working member for Willowdale, two of my colleagues. I'd like to indicate that at the outset.

This is a procedural motion that will allow the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to sit an extra week before we break for the holidays. Normally we would break next Thursday, and this resolution, if passed, would allow the House to sit an extra week, which indeed would be good news for supporters of a number of very important pieces of legislation that are before the Legislative Assembly. It will allow us the opportunity to continue to try to do the people's business before we adjourn for the holiday season.

There are a number of important pieces of legislation before the assembly. Two very important pieces of legislation have been brought forward by my colleague the Attorney General. I know there are discussions on one bill, the Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act, trying to do more to assist victims of crime. It has been really a hallmark of this government to try to do more to support victims.

Another important piece of legislation concerns domestic violence. This House earlier today talked about the tragedy that occurred 10 or 11 years ago in the city of

Montreal. There's a very important piece of domestic violence prevention and protection legislation that's been put forward by my good colleague the Attorney General and member for Whitby-Ajax, which seeks to provide the police and our justice and law enforcement officials with more power to ensure that women who have been victims of domestic violence have greater protection. It's not an answer to every problem but a substantial move forward.

I want to congratulate the Attorney General for his leadership in this initiative in pushing this bill forward. To date, I understand the bill is at the justice committee, but we'd like to get that reported out of committee, to come for an opportunity for third reading debate in this Legislature. That's something we can accomplish over the next week, the next number of days, allowing it to sit an extra week.

There's also important legislation on replica guns that's being put forward by the Solicitor General to try again to ensure public safety in the province of Ontario, particularly for our law enforcement officials. You saw in the press this fall a tragedy that took place in another jurisdiction where this was the case. This would seek to provide some protection.

1850

This is also important because there's a budget bill, the second bill that normally comes in the late fall, early winter, to bring in many of the measures passed in the budget. That legislation, presented by my colleague the Minister of Finance, Mr Eves, is an important bill. It's a very important part of our economic growth agenda. We obviously need to accomplish more.

We are excited about the economic growth that has taken place in Ontario, excited about the huge welfare caseload decline that we've seen happen in Dufferin county, which has the number one caseload decline, I say to the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, a very good riding. I had the privilege of working for the former member of Parliament from that riding for many years but the riding name has changed.

This economic growth, again, is important. We celebrate the fact that more than 800,000 net new jobs have been created in Ontario. We celebrate that success, but we can't declare a victory. We know that there are still some people out there who are looking for work and, as my colleague from Halton says, "As long as there's one person looking for a job, this government and this caucus have work to do." That's one of the priorities we're undertaking, economic growth and job creation, because the very best thing we can do for someone who's

unemployed is to give them the dignity that comes with a job and the pride that comes with being independent. That's why this budget bill, that we want to have some more opportunity to debate before the Legislature adjourns, is important.

We've discovered that every time we've cut taxes two things have happened: (1) at the end of the day we found out we brought in more money; and (2) we found out that it has assisted job creation. It has assisted in economic growth to the point where half of the new jobs created in Canada over the past five and a half years have been created right here in Ontario. It's a record which is unparalleled. In fact, our economic growth here in Ontario will lead the G8 countries for economic growth. In fact, our economic growth is even higher than that south of the border in the United States. So for those who would say that all the credit belongs to Alan Greenspan and the American economy, while that's helped, our economic growth is actually higher than it is south of the border. That is indeed good news.

Tax cuts do create jobs. When I talk to families in my constituency, whether it be a family in Metcalfe, a family in Greely, a family in Stittsville or Richmond, in North Gower or south Nepean, families have hit the tax wall. Increasingly over the years, government was taking more and more money out of their pockets and they were having a difficult time being able to provide for themselves and their families. What we've tried to do is to say not only should we stop driving into that wall, but rather we should pull back and cut taxes to help create jobs, cut taxes to allow hard-working taxpayers the chance to keep more of their hard-earned money. What we've discovered every time we've done that is they've spent that money and they've helped create even more jobs so that more economic growth ensues.

It has contributed a terrific amount to increased consumer confidence, and consumer spending has done well. I look at the home-building industry in my constituency. Whether it's in Stittsville, Longfields, Davidson Heights or Chapman Mills in south Nepean, or small home builders in Greely, Ontario, you see a terrific number of new homes being constructed in the province of Ontario. This government and this Parliament were re-elected just 18 months ago. In fact, in my constituency there are almost whole streets which didn't exist 18 months ago, so there has been a substantial amount of new home construction. We're always pleased to see that because with that comes a lot of jobs, whether it's the home builder, whether it's the person who installs the carpet, the plumber, the carpenter, the real estate agent, the lawyer that helps a family move into that home. That indeed is good news.

But that didn't happen by accident. It's happened with the assistance of tax cuts and the economic measures of this government, which is another reason why we have to have the opportunity to deal with this second budget bill.

We've seen a substantial amount of economic growth in the high-tech sector and I'm pleased to state that the new city of Ottawa is the high-tech capital of Ontario. We have a substantial amount of high-tech growth in our

part of the province, at Nortel Networks in Nepean, at JDS Uniphase in the city of Nepean as well. We've seen, in Nortel's case over the last five and a half years, more than 6,000 net new jobs created, and we'll see even more come in the future, we have learned. We've seen the incredible rise of JDS Uniphase and the former JDS Fitel; we've seen the huge amount of economic growth.

One of the challenges we have in Nepean-Carleton is building the roads and the infrastructure that will allow this growth to continue. But certainly that high-tech growth didn't happen by accident. It happened because of policies like the doubling-the-pipeline proposal presented by the Canadian Advanced Technology Association. When they came before the government and said, "We don't have enough skilled labour to meet the growing demand for people in our high-tech industry, for high-tech workers, for computer engineers, for software engineers, for electrical engineers," and the double-the-pipeline proposal was brought forward to the government, the government accepted and created the access to opportunities program.

In my part of the province, Carleton University has been a big winner under that program. I had the chance to visit Carleton with Richard Van Loon, the president of Carleton, and see the expansion that has taken place there within their engineering program. Now Carleton University has the third-highest number of engineers of any institution in the province of Ontario. That has been assisted not just with the leadership of Dr Van Loon but with the access to opportunities program, ATOP, which is indeed good news.

One of the challenges is that we educate high-tech workers in this country. We're graduating more engineers and more experts in the area of software and related fields from our colleges and universities. We also get a lot at Algonquin College in my constituency.

But one of the problems is that companies from south of the border have been coming in to recruit. The most telling example of this was that a former student who was working in my office accepted a job offer at Nortel Networks and then was offered a job in Redmond, Washington, at Microsoft. What did it for him—and I want to tell you this because you're going to be interested—was a Web site where he could plug in what his salary would be in Nepean in Canadian dollars, with the cost of living in Nepean, in the Ottawa-Carleton area, with Redmond, Washington, and what that salary would be worth there with the tax structures, the currency exchange and the cost of living. It was frightening. What it pointed out was that high-tech was being discouraged or inhibited in its growth because of high taxes. That's why we undertook to cut taxes.

But one of the initiatives that was contained in last year's budget that we're working on rolling out more—and we hope the federal government will join in that case, because they've been absent; they haven't been supportive of high-tech industry in this regard—is the stock option tax credit, particularly in our research-and-development-intensive companies, to encourage more of

those workers not just to be educated here in Ontario but to stay in the province.

The cuts in capital gains taxes that have been the challenge the Ontario government and our finance minister, Ernie Eves, have put forward, have been responded to by the federal government, but we'd like to see the stock option tax credit become a reality. That's part of the economic growth agenda of this government—very important for our continued economic growth because it's not just a high-tech worker who wins; it's the huge number of spinoff jobs that we get, particularly from research and development.

If you talk to Peter Washburn, one of the senior vice-presidents of Nortel, he'll tell you about the percentage of R&D, research and development, in Canada that takes place at Nortel Networks, right in Nepean, Ontario. It's incredible, and we want to encourage more of that, because that world R&D that takes place in the province of Ontario and the city of Nepean is a great benefit to our entire economy. It helps bring in a lot more tax revenue, so if we want to provide more support for our hospitals, like the Queensway Carleton Hospital in my community, like the Ottawa Hospital, like the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, we need a growing economy to pay for those things. It's done and fuelled in large measure, in my part of the province, by high tech and the spinoff jobs coming from high tech. That's another important part.

We have to be here to debate some of these pieces of legislation, so that we have the opportunity to debate. I know there will be some in my office—I think of Will Stewart or Mike Van Soelen—who won't want us to work an extra week. But I can tell you, we're committed to not leave until the job is done.

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Also, bringing in a balanced budget this year has been an important part of that economic growth, an important part of that job creation agenda. I know there was a lot of heavy lifting done. I look at the member for Oak Ridges, formerly York-Mackenzie. He did a lot of that heavy lifting so we could bring in a balanced budget in the province. When we arrived as the government back in 1995, we had an \$11.9-billion—I apologize—an \$11.3-billion deficit.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Baird: It would have been \$11.9 billion if it had gone on even another month or two, the member for Oak Ridges says, and he is right. We worked hard to make some difficult but necessary decisions, to help provide Ontario with a balanced budget. But we did so, at the same time, cognizant that the very best way we could balance our budget was to help job creation, that economic growth would be the shot of adrenaline this economy needed.

The Liberal Party said you couldn't balance the budget and cut taxes at the same time, that you'd have to ask those who were living in despair, those who were unemployed, to take a number: "We'll get to you in five years, in four years, when the budget is balanced." But this government, hard-working members like Jim Fla-

herty, Frank Klees, John O'Toole and Brenda Elliott, said no. Ted Chudleigh said no. David Tilson said no and Gerry Martiniuk said no. They said they didn't want to leave anyone behind, David Tilson particularly. We worked hard to bring in that balanced budget and cut taxes and try to stimulate economic growth in this province.

I'll tell you it was not a pretty sight when we arrived here. In the five years before this government was elected, before Mike Harris became Premier, we lost 10,000 jobs. In the last five and a half years, not the government, not politicians, but hard-working taxpayers and small business people have helped create more than 800,000 net new jobs in this province, and that is indeed very good. The record is clear. That didn't happen by accident; it happened because we had a good economic agenda. That's why the budget bill, budget bill 2 for the fall, that we'll be able to debate for an extra week, will be important.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Baird: There's the NDP—the NDP leader is here—telling us how to run the economy. I'll put Mike Harris's record against the Hampton-Rae record any day, any time. They were in government for five years. It was terrible, doom and gloom. So much has been said about that. We have repealed so much of the bad legislation. We had the chance to debate some labour legislation, and I remind—

Interjections.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I wonder if you could rule on whether "windbag" is parliamentary language.

The Acting Speaker: If there's anything the member for Kenora-Rainy River would like to say that would add to the debate, that would be fine. If not, we'll ask you to go back to your Christmas cards.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I would ask the member to withdraw that remark.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): If I've offended you, Speaker, I withdraw it.

The Acting Speaker: No, it will be unconditional. Just withdraw.

Mr Hampton: I withdraw the remark "windbag."

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member once more just to withdraw.

Mr Hampton: I withdraw the remark "windbag." I understand that is the term you take offence to.

The Acting Speaker: I'll ask once more. I'd ask you to withdraw the remark unconditionally.

Mr Hampton: Mr Speaker, which remark do you find unparliamentary? I will withdraw it.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Mr Baird: I remember this member of the Bob Rae government. His idea of an agenda for the government of Ontario was to run an \$11.3-billion deficit and then override every collective agreement in the public

sector of the province of Ontario. That was his agenda. That was his labour agenda. So when people say our labour legislation is bad, I get out the quotes, and they said so many worse things about him and his government. I know he personally advocated for the social contract. They had a negotiation, and when they couldn't get a negotiation they just went in and stripped the collective agreement. That was their way of doing things, and the people of Ontario have spoken and passed judgment on those ways of doing things.

Our economic growth agenda is working. We've seen a steady number of jobs created, not by the government but by hard-working taxpayers in the province of Ontario. We've seen a lot of growth, and indeed that growth is compounding some of the problems we have.

In my constituency we have real problems with growth in that we can't build schools fast enough for the young families who are moving into my constituency. While we've seen more than seven schools built in my constituency, which is a good start, a lot of parents in Stittsville are really keen to get a new school built, and you bet your boots I'm working hard on that with others—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Kenora-Rainy River, come to order.

Hon Mr Baird: We need a new public school in Longfields/Davidson Heights and that's something we've been working for. My colleague the Minister of Education made a regulation change which allowed \$14 million to be freed up from capital development charges, which could allow the new schools to be built, and we want to see the school board move forward so that those children don't have to be bused out of their home communities and don't have to live in portables. They lived for five years in portables under the NDP. We built seven new schools in the last five years, so we've done a lot better. We haven't solved everything, but we indeed are doing better. But that overcrowding is certainly my top local priority, and that's why an economic growth agenda and this motion to sit longer is important.

We also have, as has been discussed in many debates, important infrastructure. This budget and budget bill that supports our economic growth plan envisages more money for infrastructure. We need more money for infrastructure in my community, in my riding, in Manotick, with water and waste water treatment, in Osgoode township, where we've had water problems, in Metcalfe and Edwards. So that agenda is very important.

We can also pass the corrections bill that's before the House. In my community, in Burritts Rapids, we have a facility that's going to be closing down—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I'm patient. There's another event going on in this building that you're welcome to attend. There are Christmas cards to sign. We'll get a sandbox for you to play in if you need it. But I'll not put up with any of this shouting across the room, and I'll not warn the member for Kenora-Rainy River again.

Mr Hampton: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Where is the Minister of Corrections?

Hon Mr Baird: The former Minister of Corrections, Rob Sampson, is someone in this House who will take second place on integrity, on honour, on honourable conduct, to no one in this place. I am incredibly proud to call him a friend and incredibly proud to serve in the caucus. If we had had members like the member for Mississauga Centre in the NDP caucus—I can think of a few examples—this province would have been very, very fortunate.

The corrections bill is an important part of our—because we're trying to take the Rideau regional centre, correctional facility, in Burritts Rapids, Ontario, and turn it into a young offenders' facility. That'll be good news for our community. We'll be able to keep some jobs in the community that otherwise would not have been able to be kept, and I'm certainly very supportive of that. Sitting a lot longer will be important. We can also deal with some of these other challenges we're facing in terms of the budget bill and appropriations.

I'll tell you the economic growth needed to continue is very important in my area, because we need more money for health care, like the Queensway-Carleton Hospital, which is undergoing an operational review right now. Tom Schonberg, the president of the hospital, has been working hard and we have announced three times in the last eight weeks substantial new funding, a record amount, spending \$5 billion more than the NDP spent on health care.

That is very important for the agenda of the province of Ontario, very important for the agenda of the people's place, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. That's why I'm prepared to spend an extra week before our Christmas holiday break to stay here and to work harder. I know the legislative rules say we should only sit an extra week. What I'm saying is that this member, this caucus, this cabinet, this Legislature should be prepared to work harder and to not go home until we're able to accomplish a lot more. That's why I support this important resolution and that's why I urge all members of the House to give it speedy passage.

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Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): I'm very pleased to rise in support of this resolution before the House tonight. In my riding of Guelph-Wellington we have a company called Mike the Mover. I don't know why it popped into my head tonight. I guess it's maybe because Mike's a special name on this side of the House, because obviously it's the name of our great leader. But Mike the Mover is a moving company in our riding and their motto is so apropos to what we're talking about tonight: "We Love To Work." That's what this is all about tonight. We're debating here in the House a motion to extend December sittings.

In talking to the chief government whip earlier on, I was surprised, and I asked him, "Will the opposition members actually be opposing this particular motion?" He indicated to me, "Yes, indeed they will be." I'll be

curious to know if the Liberals and the NDP oppose sitting an extra few days to address the issues of the House and the legislation that's before it.

It seems shocking to me that people who are elected by constituents all across this province would demonstrate by actually debating in the House here that they don't want to stay for an extra few days—and we're talking about days—to discuss matters of importance to the Legislature. We're here to establish laws and to establish policies which govern this province. That they would want to go home before the government business is completed is, quite frankly, astounding to me.

We were given a document earlier tonight that indicated that 24 bills had been presented and had passed first reading here in the House; 15 remain to yet pass third reading. My colleague from Nepean-Carlton mentioned a number of them. Part of my discussion could be to go through these bills in their details, to talk about what is yet to be discussed by the Legislature—obviously extremely important: a made-in-Ontario tax, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, accountability in corrections, the Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act. That they would want to leave before this particular piece of legislation is passed is unbelievable to me. Transportation delivery service, replica guns—

Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Could you check to see if we have a quorum, please?

The Acting Speaker: Would the table check for a quorum, please?

Acting Clerk at the Table (Mr Tom Prins): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Acting Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Guelph-Wellington.

Mrs Elliott: Thank you, Speaker. We do have people here in this House ready to work. As I said before I was interrupted, it's astounding to me that people across the House in the Liberal Party and the NDP want to even debate that we shouldn't stay to complete government business. I would be very interested to ask their constituents how they feel about this.

As I knew we were going to debate this tonight, one of the assistants in my office, Vijay Chauhan, who has been with me for some time as my legislative assistant, and I were discussing what it is that we would want to talk about tonight. One of the things we thought might be useful would be to look, for example, at my riding in detail. When my constituents send me here from Guelph-Wellington, they have an expectation of how I'm going to behave in this House, what kind of representation I'm going to display on their behalf.

Here in this Legislature we come from all points of Ontario and sometimes we don't know each other's ridings particularly well, so I thought if I described to my colleagues here in the Legislature what my riding is like and how the people in my riding would feel about this kind of debate, it might perhaps give a different perspective on the situation we're in tonight.

My riding is called Guelph-Wellington. It primarily encompasses the city of Guelph, a city of about 100,000 people. When the ridings were reconfigured and reduced from 130 to 103 to match the federal ridings, it then included two rural sections of the riding: a township called Puslinch and a township called Guelph-Eramosa. Tonight in the dining room we had representatives from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. They were very interested to recognize that my riding also has some rural representation in it, which it didn't have before. I pointed out to them that what the Dairy Farmers of Ontario do and what matters concern them were always of importance to me in my riding, because for many years the city of Guelph has been recognized as a key leader in agricultural interests by people not only in Ontario but across the nation. That's primarily because our city of 100,000 or so has, as one of its jewels, the University of Guelph. Its nickname in the city is "Moo U" because it was originally based as an agricultural college, and over the years has evolved into a world-class university that is recognized all around the world for its agricultural expertise, its expertise in biotechnology, in so many areas of research. In fact, it is the university with which OMAFRA, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food for the province, has a very special research relationship. That has been earned over the years by the excellent quality of work done at the University of Guelph.

Its president is now Dr Mort Rodzanski, and I know the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities highly regards the advice that President Rodzanski offers to her. The university, last year and I think the year before that, was recognized as the number one comprehensive university in Canada. This year it slipped a little bit, to number two, but I think that will just be impetus for it to work very hard to be number one yet again.

The city which is the centre of my riding has its name from "Guelph," which is actually a German name relating to the royal Hanoverian family. In fact, the nickname of the city of Guelph is the Royal City, because we've had both a king and a princess come to visit. There are those in the city who say it's time that our moniker was changed and that we should become known as the City of Music. Very few people would know, other than people from Guelph, that we have a very, very strong relationship in music. We have a number of sponsored festivals, such as the Guelph Spring Festival, which is primarily a classical and jazz festival. We have the Hillside Festival. We have the Guelph Jazz Festival, which was mentioned by commentators in the Toronto papers this year on a number of occasions as being probably the best jazz festival in Canada, perhaps in North America. And it's only in its fifth, perhaps sixth, year of existence.

Guelph is an interesting city and has all these little undercurrents of culture and art that have been thriving. As we're here debating whether or not we should stay to discuss government business, I think it's fair to say that the city of Guelph, in fact the entire riding of Guelph-Wellington, is an area that has particularly prospered under the Harris government times.

Before I ever became involved in politics, I was actually a teacher originally and then I was an entrepreneur. The strongest impetus that got me involved in politics was that, as an entrepreneur, I could see that essentially Ontario was going to hell in a handbasket under the Liberal and NDP governments. It wasn't the kind of future I envisioned for my children. It certainly wasn't the kind of thing that I felt my constituents as a whole wanted. They weren't constituents at the time; they were just colleagues and friends who saw that trouble was the future for Ontario and it wasn't what this great province deserved or should have as its future. That's how I got involved in politics.

Our city is uniquely placed geographically in that we are very close to almost anywhere. People who have come to live in the city remark that we're 45 minutes to an hour away from almost anywhere, whether it be the big city of Toronto or Lake Huron. We are very close to Kitchener, obviously. In Kitchener, Cambridge and Waterloo, we are part of Canada's technology triangle.

My colleague from Nepean-Carleton, Minister Baird, was talking earlier about a number of businesses in his riding which have focused on high-tech industry. That is certainly also the case in my riding of Guelph-Wellington. When we weathered the recession, which was made deeper by the failed policies of the NDP government across the way, one of the things that helped us so much in our riding was the great diversity of businesses we have. We have outstanding businesses like Linamar, which is a large auto parts manufacturing company, but we have a very broad range of businesses that, because of their diversity—obviously many have an agricultural bent—have helped us weather the kind of storm that the recession ravaged in so many parts of Ontario. We were very, very lucky.

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Having said that, because we had a good base coming out of the recession, we have seen a government like this government that I am so proud to be a part of establish an economic climate that has been so conducive to entrepreneurs taking a chance with their money, starting businesses, hiring people, venturing into trade around the world, which has proven for our community to be of immense benefit. The only words, as I said earlier, that describe how our community is managing are "thriving and prospering." We've had new companies like Denso, for instance, which is a Japanese-based company. Their first Canadian plant was established in Ontario because of the policies of our government, and it was established in Guelph.

If you were to drive down the streets of the city of Guelph—as a friend who recently visited here from Scotland remarked, it felt like home for her because it very much reminds people of Scotland. It was in fact established by John Galt, with the Canada Company relationship. He brought a number of people not only from the United States but from Scotland, and many of them were stonemasons. When they came to Guelph, they discovered they had a wonderful treasure of

limestone, so many of the buildings in our beautiful city were constructed from quarried limestone. It is indeed quite lovely. We have, obviously, like so many communities, a local architectural conservationists' association that works to preserve these, but it's not very hard work in our community because people take great pride in the buildings we have. We have this gorgeous architecture that surrounds us, but there's something about that Scottish background and that heritage that I think has translated somehow into the work ethic of our city as a whole.

We've had a number of different names over the years. "Cosmopolitan countryside" was one they tried that they thought maybe suited the city of Guelph because we have this urban centre and then we have these rural ties here and there, all over. But I think one thing that people have remarked upon as they've come to know the city, even though we're 100,000 people plus if you consider the rural surrounds, is that what we have been able to maintain in a very strong way is that we still have a very small-town heart. It doesn't really matter where you go in the city of Guelph, you're still in a city; you have all the big-city amenities. But you still have the ability to bump into people, no matter where you go, who know you, who recognize you. We still have one daily paper, so we have a common point of communication to everyone. We also have a paper that publishes twice a week. But we have still been able to keep those strong, vital links that have made us a very strong and, I dare say, a very happy and comfortable city. If you are in Guelph, you have a sense of beauty and peace. The city itself was established around two rivers, the Speed and the Eramosa. In fact, people have noted that when they come to live in Guelph, they develop what they would often describe as a green conscience. We're a very environmentally conscious city.

I was very amused to hear all of the discussion and acrimony that occurred, and actually still isn't over yet, over the city of Toronto trying to find a place to put its garbage. Of course, the big discussion was, "Will we truck it to the Adams mine or will we send it to Michigan? What the heck will we do with all this garbage?" In my city years ago—in fact it was my former business partner of many years ago who was actually instrumental in getting this underway and I was certainly part of the committees that made it happen—we established a city-wide composting project so that all of the organic waste in the city of Guelph becomes compost, never finds its way to a landfill site. Quite frankly, we're surprised and a little bit disgusted that jurisdictions across the province haven't had the gumption or the common sense to find a way to deal with their garbage in a much more responsible way like the city of Guelph has. I think that's because we have, for some reason or other, always had a very green conscience.

I've been waxing eloquent about all the lovely things about our community that make us a very happy, prosperous and thriving community, and I can say that when people come to talk to me about how things are going in

the province, they are for the most part very pleased with the policies our government has put forward.

Now, I do want to take an opportunity to mention one thing. I'm wearing red today, which is not a normal colour a Conservative member of provincial Parliament would wear. We're always teased if we wear red; we're supposed to wear blue. This is just not our colour. But it's particularly significant for me because my counterpart in the riding of Guelph-Wellington is also a Brenda. To my knowledge, this is the only place in all of North America where we have two representatives, both Brenda, both the same age, both blonde, both about the same height. She always blames the other Brenda. It's "the Brenda" and "the other Brenda," depending on which one you're talking to. She almost always wears red. This is a real challenge for our constituents. Last weekend, after the federal election was over, in going down to the market and to the library and doing my normal errands on the weekend, I cannot tell you how many people came up and congratulated me on my re-election, even though I had not been in an election. This had nothing to do with me.

Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I would seek unanimous consent that all members from Guelph henceforth be named Brenda.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: the member for Don Valley East raised the point. Members from Don Valley East should all be named Caplan.

Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: They are.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mrs Elliott: My colleagues from across the way on the Liberal side of the House are teasing me because I brought this up, but it's actually been kind of interesting having the two Brendas. We tease each other about it. The interesting thing is, we've actually come to an agreement, Brenda Chamberlain, who is a Liberal member, and I. We have had constituents come to us whom we know quite well and who speak to us in earnest about a very important issue and suddenly we see this look of horror cross their face as they realize they are talking to the wrong Brenda. So we have come to an agreement that we don't explain to the constituent that in fact they're talking to the wrong Brenda. We nod and we smile and we say, "Yes, we understand." We make a point of speaking to each other about the issue for this poor constituent's peace of mind that the matter has in fact been brought to the attention of the appropriate elected official.

To my colleague's point of order, a couple of people have said that actually our newly elected mayor is indeed a woman as well. Her name is Karen Farbridge. For the record, I would like to congratulate Karen on being Guelph's first woman mayor. We've been teasing her that we thought a petition should be passed that Karen should change her name to Brenda as well and it would just be much easier for all of our constituents.

Having said that, we're here in the House tonight to debate a motion as to whether or not we should, in this Legislature of Ontario, stay for an extra period of time, probably another week, to debate matters of importance to the Legislature.

I took a few moments to tell you about some important landmarks and people and businesses in my wonderful riding of Guelph-Wellington. When you go into public life, you're not sure what it is. You usually go because there's a policy or there are matters of economic importance that are triggering you to go, but I think for my part one of the greatest pleasures that has come to me being a member of elected office is having the opportunity to meet the most interesting people, that I would never have had the opportunity to meet; to go into businesses and companies and factories which you drive by all the time. You see a façade and you have no idea what's going on. People, in my riding at any rate, are endlessly interesting and fascinating. They get up every morning and they all share the same values. They want to do their very best to take care of themselves and their families.

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When they elected me as their representative, they thought they were electing someone who had the best interests of their riding as a whole at heart and that I was part of a team, led by our leader, Premier Harris, who had those same goals and values that they shared. I work very diligently to do my best to mirror the kinds of values they share and the desires they have. I do not embrace the ideas from the Liberal and NDP members across the way that government should do everything for everybody all the time. In my view, that's wrong. That robs people of their desire to be self-reliant, to be creative, to be individual and to be independent. I think we've got it right on this side. We know that our job is to establish an economic climate that allows them to flourish, to do things for those in our society who can't do things for themselves well.

When people say to me, for instance, "You're a Conservative; therefore you must not have a social conscience," they don't understand that when we're here taking care of the business of the province, we are actually enabling those services to be delivered to people who can't find ways to support themselves, whether it be in health care or in education or in social services. So a strong foundation based on a wise and sound economic policy is absolutely fundamental to a healthy economy and to a healthy province.

I am endlessly grateful to be part of that. I am eternally grateful to have the opportunity to represent my constituents in Guelph-Wellington, whether they're out in Puslinch, as part of that kind of Scottish-like terrain that is so rocky they call the stones their Puslinch potatoes, or out in Guelph-Eramosa, which is acres and acres of beautiful, rich farmland, or down in the middle of the city, which is a thriving, bustling community. Every day I come down here to Queen's Park eager to do my bit to support this government and its policies,

because in my view they are the right things for Guelph-Wellington and the province as a whole.

So if my colleagues across the way from the Liberals or NDP are saying to me tonight that they don't want to stay for an extra week or two to finish the business of the government, then I oppose that. I am very supportive of our House leader's motion. I will speak in favour of that, as I have tonight, I will vote in favour of it, and I will urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I'd like to thank the member for Guelph-Wellington for her comments, which I think very much capture the essence of what the government is attempting to do here this evening.

The reality is that the business of governing is one that often includes unexpected challenges, and this term is no exception to that. There have been a number of pieces of legislation that have come forward in front of this House that one could never have expected to be necessary, but circumstances have arisen that have caused us to need to discuss them.

Before I go on to talk about those various pieces of legislation and the obligation of the members of this assembly to thoroughly debate them and ultimately vote upon them, I'd like to just pause to reflect upon a criticism that occasionally we hear from the opposition benches, and beyond on occasion: that we as MPPs do not spend enough time in this building, that we don't spend enough time actually debating bills. I say to you that it's very interesting, and frankly puzzling to me on occasion, to hear that suggested when one understands that members on both sides of this assembly spend a great deal of time in this building, including into the evening hours, as is evident from our presence here this evening, and beyond that spend a great deal of time in our communities. One of the unfortunate parts of being here for as many hours as we are through this fall legislative sitting is that on so many occasions we are obliged to turn down invitations from our constituents to attend at events, events that range from celebrations local or provincial in nature to honouring individuals in our community who have distinguished themselves because of their activity either in business or in the name of volunteerism or in local schools. Unfortunately, time and time again we are obliged to say no, as difficult as it is to do, and instead be here to debate these matters.

But that is the balancing, that's the weighing that each and every member has to do, that we as a party and we collectively as legislators must do, in order to fulfill the numerous challenges that exist. I should say to you that I'm not here to complain; I am not here to lament. I am here to say that it is a privilege to serve in this assembly and that each and every one of us should, and I think in most instances we do, respect the fact that we are here as servants of our voters, that we are here because we are privileged. So we have this responsibility.

In this legislative sitting we have debated numerous bills, ranging from the technical standards bill to the Labour Relations Amendment Act, which was the subject of some considerable debate here, to the electronic com-

merce bill brought forward by the Attorney General. That is a bill that has been replicated in other parts of North America, a bill that is going to become more and more relevant as we talk of the involvement and the importance of the Internet, because as useful a tool as it is, and it is indeed a very useful tool, it is also a mechanism that, if not properly controlled and regulated, could lead to fraudulent activity taking place, and in some instances has. I compliment the Attorney General for coming forward with that legislation in a timely fashion. As I say, because of what we see in other jurisdictions, it's quite clear that we in Ontario were leading the way.

We debated a racing commission bill here. The energy board amendment act was in front of this Legislature and was the subject of some considerable discussion, as was the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act.

I don't know where my friends opposite stand on that particular bill, but I say to you that there are some very important provisions in there to deal with the regulation of motorized vehicles in this province. There are some provisions that may well extend beyond the regulation of snowmobiles to other types of motorized vehicles. In the insurance industry, I know there was a hue and cry after a recent decision left some considerable doubt about the definition of a snowmobile, as to whether or not under the Insurance Act it was an automobile and thus subject to the provisions of what is commonly known as Bill 59. Those provisions include a threshold that prevents people from suing unless their injuries are serious and permanent; they include a \$15,000 deductible for injured plaintiffs and a \$7,500 deductible for Family Law Act claimants under that legislation. For a very lengthy period of time citizens of this province expected that snowmobiles would be characterized in that way. That was true not only under the current legislation; it was true under its predecessor, which is commonly known as Bill 164, a piece of legislation introduced by the New Democratic Party when they were the government, and it's just as true of the Ontario motorist protection plan that was in existence when the Liberals were in power. So for a very lengthy period of time it was expected, it was believed, that snowmobiles were to be treated as automobiles when it came to this issue. As I say, a recent court decision has brought some doubt to that issue. I'm certainly glad that as a government we're proceeding forward to bring some greater definition and certainty to snowmobiles and other motorized vehicles.

We also talked at length about the McMichael collection, and legislation was passed with respect to same. That was an issue about which many on both sides of the Legislature had a great deal to say.

Frankly, I invite that sort of healthy debate. That's why we're here. I certainly hope my friends opposite aren't intending to oppose the motion that is in front of the Legislature today. Surely, as valuable as their time is, as valuable as the time of the government members is, it is understood that our primary responsibility is to be here, is to serve our constituents, whether it's our local riding or whether it's provincially, and to ensure that the

legislation that needs to be passed is passed. That's why this government is quite prepared to extend the time to sit later into December even though for many it will mean some considerable disruption to their family lives and their social lives. But it is of the utmost importance that the government fulfill its responsibility, and certainly the opposition, even though I appreciate that it is their job to oppose—in fact they seem to readily adopt the adage “Whatever it is, we're against it.” It is their responsibility as well, though, to ensure that important legislation—

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Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Speaker: Could you tell me if there is a quorum please.

The Acting Speaker: Would you check and see if there's a quorum?

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Call in the members. This will be up to a five-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Willowdale.

Mr Young: I was talking at some length about the need for us to continue this legislative session. I sincerely believe that for a number of reasons, and I'm going to talk about some of the legislation still pending that we're going to be debating in the House.

I also want to reference the fact that we have had other bills that have come through the Legislature, and one that I am most familiar with is, of course, the property tax legislation. It was introduced and ultimately passed in this assembly, and it is legislation that will continue to provide protection for taxpayers across this province. It ends the days of double-digit tax increases which people in this province saw in years past, and it brings some considerable stability to the municipal tax system.

I know that many of those watching may well say “You talk about stability, yet we recently received an OPAC—Ontario Property Assessment Corp—notice that suggests that the value of our property, be it business or residential, has increased or decreased.” I think it's worth taking a moment to talk about what that means. It clearly means that is the value of the property as assessed by the Ontario Property Assessment Corp in June 1999. They took a snapshot of every property across this province and have reported on that to municipalities and to individual property owners. Why is that necessary? It's necessary because for decades within this province we operated with an antiquated tax system. In some municipalities that meant we were using assessments that were as old as six decades, in that neighbourhood. Other municipalities had done assessments in a more timely fashion and they might be five or 10 or 12 years old. But what came of that, before we introduced this legislation and its predecessor, were situations throughout the province where homes, businesses on the same street—similar homes, identical homes on the same street in the same municipality receiving the exact same services—were

paying markedly different taxes, in some instances twice as much, and the only reason for that was they had been assessed at different times and there had been no overall assessment, no opportunity to have your home or your business valued.

Study after study in years past by government after government, and regardless of their political affiliation, whether they be New Democrat or Liberal or Conservative, they weren't prepared to tackle this rather contentious yet very important and relevant issue. We did. We did because it was the right thing to do, because every expert, every politician, if asked, would answer that that was what was necessary. So we went about reforming the system, and this piece of legislation that we introduced, Bill 140, that was debated here at first reading, second reading and ultimately third reading is now the law of this province. It brings some certainly, some uniformity, to the process.

In terms of the future, we know there is a budget bill yet to be debated in this assembly. It's a bill that is going to allow for a made-in-Ontario tax solution to be achieved. Up until this time, a resident calculated their Ontario taxes as a percentage of their federal taxes. With the passage of this bill, if the Legislature decides to pass it, there will be a change. What might seem an insignificant change is in fact a very significant change. It will be a change that will cause the residents of this province to be able to get the direct tax savings that this government intends to pass on to them. It will end the bracket creep that has existed for so long in this province, and it is a process that is being undertaken in most of the provinces for very similar reasons.

I want to mention one point that has come up on a number of occasions when discussing the budget bill, in particular the made-in-Ontario tax form. I want the viewers to know that they will not be required to fill out another lengthy document, another tax form, as I believe they do in Quebec, as some fear might occur. Although details are yet to be determined, in reality what it will mean is perhaps another one or two lines—or one or two different lines, not necessarily more lines—on the type of tax form you've been filling out for years, and it will be arguably more simple and it will be much clearer to the taxpayer what tax they are paying and to whom they are paying it. That level of transparency can only be welcomed by the people of this province, and I believe, with the greatest respect to all members of this House, must indeed be welcomed by each and every member of this assembly, because it is a sensible, fair approach to taxation. People should know what they're paying, who they're paying it to and why they're paying it. For so many years in this province and in this country we haven't had the opportunity to do that.

I am very pleased bill has been introduced. I am certainly very hopeful it will pass. If I go back to where I started, that's why it's so important that we extend the House calendar motion into the month of December—so that we can complete that.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I'm not about to say tonight that I want to go home, because I rather like this place. I think this is an ideal opportunity for us to make sure that we keep the government accountable. That's what I'm going to do tonight, because I'm going to slam the government on one area where they have totally let down the people of this province, and that's when it comes to agriculture.

But before I get into agriculture, I want to talk a little bit about one area that is very near and dear to my heart. It's an area that affects 1.5 million persons in this province, and that's the question of persons with disabilities. This government has abandoned persons with disabilities. Mike Harris promised in writing on May 24, 1995, that within the first term of office the government of Ontario would enact an Ontarians With Disabilities Act. This government loves to stand up and say, "Promise made, promise kept." Well, promise made, promise not kept. You have let down 1.5 million persons in this province. You can talk; you can stand up and say that Bill 83 was the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, but it wasn't even close. It was a joke. It was a three-page piece of paper that did nothing about removing barriers for persons with disabilities in this province. As a government, you should be ashamed at how you have let down those people. I can assure a million and a half persons with disabilities in this province that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party are committed to ensuring that that legislation is put in place.

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Mr O'Toole: That means nothing.

Mr Peters: It does mean something. It means something to a million and a half people with disabilities, and you think it's a joke. So many of you think it's a joke, and it's not.

Something else I'd love to hear from this government: tonight I heard the Minister of Community and Social Services talk about 800,000 jobs created. Two days ago the Minister of Finance, Ernie Eves, talked about 725,000 jobs created. They can't get their numbers right. It just doesn't add up. You on the other side are not up to the job. You can thank the American economy for what has happened in this province, and thank the good work of Paul Martin and the federal Liberals for the policies they have put in place to encourage job creation and economic growth and development in this province.

I want to talk about another area that I know is near and dear to your heart, Speaker, and I appreciate that you're the only member who is willing to talk about archives and the importance of preserving our written record for future generations. I commend the Speaker for putting forth the motion to declare Archives Week in Ontario, because the government of Ontario has let down the Ontario archives. They've let down municipalities in this province with the downloading that's taking place.

There are important municipal records—our municipal history goes back to the Baldwin Act of 1849. This government, through its ill-fated venture toward restructuring, has seen an unprecedented number of municipalities

in this province disappear. Archival records have been lost forever, and there's no commitment from the government to the importance of archives in this province. I think that's sad.

Another area I would like to speak about tonight is a really serious problem. I represent the riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London. Elgin county encompasses 100 kilometres on the north shore of Lake Erie. Every year we're losing hundreds and hundreds of acres into Lake Erie as a result of erosion, but there's no commitment from the Minister of Natural Resources, no commitment from the Minister of Agriculture, no commitment from the Minister of the Environment to do something as we watch this very valuable resource disappear into Lake Erie. There's no commitment from the Minister of Municipal Affairs as we see this valuable resource of agricultural land disappear as a result of urban sprawl.

That leads me to what I'd like to speak about tonight. As critic for agriculture, I think that with 60,000 farms and countless men, women and children who devote hours and hours of their day and their week to the business of agriculture and the agri-food industry, there needs to be a voice for agriculture in this province. It's very obvious that there's no voice on the government side. There's no voice from the Minister of Agriculture, there's no voice from the cabinet, there's no voice from the backbench in support of this important industry. I think that's sad for the number two industry in this province.

We need only to look back at the very foundations of this province. What built this province? It was immigration, the individuals who came to this province, cleared the land and opened the land up, farmers who built this land and created municipalities. The agricultural resource of this province is at the root of the beginnings of this province. Unfortunately and sadly, it's something that has been totally neglected by this government.

I want to tell you that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party recognize the importance of agriculture to this province. We realize agriculture plays an important role in the economy, and not only from an agricultural standpoint—my colleague John Cleary, the critic responsible for rural affairs, is here tonight too. Rural Ontario has been abandoned by this government because of the mentality of made-in-Toronto solutions for the rest of Ontario. I encourage my colleagues on the opposite side to listen to this: what's best for Toronto isn't necessarily best for the rest of this province. Unfortunately you've been driven by an agenda that's controlled by Bay Street, and you've been driven by an agenda that's controlled by this small group of people around the Premier of this province, which is known as the centre. The centre, the Premier and Bay Street have abandoned rural Ontario, they've abandoned the agri-food business and they've abandoned the farmers of Ontario. I think it's shameful that your government has done that, shameful that that aspect of our economy, the root of the economy of this province, has been abandoned.

Agriculture is not a priority with your government. It's obvious when you look at the cuts to agriculture that have taken place since you were elected in 1995. Mike Harris promised no cuts to agriculture. What happened? We've seen an unprecedented cut in funding to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. We've seen cuts to agricultural offices. We've seen cuts to outreach programs. We've seen a mentality that they're going to be replaced by the Internet. Let me tell my colleagues on the opposite side that we've got a long way to go to ensure that rural Ontario is connected, but there is no financial commitment from your government to do that.

There's no vision for agriculture on the government side, no vision for rural Ontario. I don't know how you can fail to recognize the important role the number two industry plays in this province. We've just heard that the Big Three auto makers are talking about a downturn. But as there is a downturn, every one of us, 103 people in this Legislature tonight, the pages and all the staff, have to eat. We've got to ensure there is a commitment to the agricultural industry in this province, and that commitment does not exist from the other side.

Speaker, you, as the representative from Perth-Middlesex, know there is a crisis in the agricultural community today, a crisis we haven't seen for a long, long time. Some things are beyond our control as politicians. We cannot control the weather. But as politicians we have a role to play when adverse weather conditions take place, that the agricultural community knows the government is going to be there, standing behind them. But not this government, not the Mike Harris government that has abandoned the farmers of this province.

People are hurting in this province, Speaker. They're hurting in your riding, they're hurting in Garfield Dunlop's riding, they're hurting in Ted Chudleigh's riding. But do you know what? They hurt in Steve Gilchrist's and Raminder Gill's ridings too. Whether we're urban or rural, we depend on agriculture. Every day we go to the corner store or to the grocery store. We need agriculture, and we need a strong agricultural economy in this province. Unfortunately, be you urban or rural members of the Conservative caucus, you've abandoned the agricultural community in this province.

The Speaker and my colleagues John Cleary and Sean Conway and other members of this Legislature can realize this, because we've seen the economic impact studies. The Speaker even made reference to an economic impact study in a statement in this Legislature. We've seen, first hand, the important, powerful role agriculture plays in our communities today, but it falls on deaf ears on the government side.

You don't realize that agriculture is the number two industry in this province. But is it a priority? No. Is it put into silos within government? Yes, it is. You've got agriculture and food doing something, you've got environment doing something, you've got municipal affairs doing something, you're got economic development and trade doing something. Is agriculture viewed as a

priority? No. Is agriculture viewed as a priority among your caucus and cabinet and, most important of all, by the Premier? How often have we heard "agriculture" come out of the Premier's mouth in this Legislature? Not very often—very rarely. When was the last time the Premier of this province met with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture? It's been a long time, and that's wrong.

If Frank Stronach were to call the Premier today he'd have a meeting tomorrow. If Jack Wilkinson, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, were to call the Premier's office, he'd be waiting a month, goodness knows how long, and that is wrong.

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We need a government that is committed to agriculture. We have heard in this Legislature and through the agricultural publications across this province since June 1999 that agriculture deserves its fair share from the federal government. And do you know what? I'll stand up today and commend Ernie Hardeman for his efforts in ensuring that the farmers of Ontario have received a fair and equal share of funding from the federal government. Lyle Vanclicf and the federal Liberals have recognized that they have to provide a fair share of financial support to all provinces equally across this country. I commend the minister for doing that and I commend Lyle Vanclicf for doing that, but—

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): He hasn't paid the money.

Mr Peters: He does pay, but you don't pay. You don't pay. I don't even want to talk to you about it right now. You just listen to me, because maybe you'll—if you speak up to me right now like you're speaking, why don't you speak up within your caucus? Why don't you speak up to your cabinet members like you're doing right now? It's easy for you to do, but you don't do it. You don't speak up, and that's the problem. You don't speak up for agriculture in this province. You love to speak up and talk to the ag critic, but you won't talk to the Minister of Agriculture. Come on.

I talk about the fair share. Every province in Canada now is receiving a fair share of funding from the federal government. But what this government and this minister have failed to recognize is that that 40% commitment that needs to be made by the provincial government—

Interjection.

Mr Peters: It's not a maximum commitment; it's a minimum commitment. I would urge the member, Garfield Dunlop, to speak up and ask the minister, Ernie Hardeman, is 40% a minimum or a maximum?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): The member for Simcoe North, order. Let the member who is speaking speak, please.

Mr Dunlop: I'll make my comments about it later.

Mr Peters: I truly wish the member for Simcoe North would speak up, as he is with me tonight, to the Minister of Agriculture, because the 40% contribution that the provincial government makes to agriculture is not a maximum, it's a minimum. We need a Minister of Agriculture, we need a Ministry of Agriculture, to recognize

that there is a crisis within the agricultural community in Ontario. We need a minister to recognize—like the Minister of Agriculture in Alberta has, like the ministers in British Columbia, in Quebec, in Newfoundland—that the 40% commitment is not a maximum, it's a minimum. We need members like the member for Simcoe North to speak up within their caucus. We need members like the Minister of Agriculture to speak up at the cabinet table, and we need leadership from the Premier of this province for the agricultural community. That leadership is non-existent.

I want to tell you that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party of this province are going to keep this government accountable. We're not going to allow you to relegate agriculture to the backburner in this province. We need agriculture kept in the forefront because agriculture is the foundation of this province and agriculture is an important part of the industry that fuels this province. That recognition, unfortunately, doesn't exist.

Let's deal with another issue: the agricultural operations act. My leader, Dalton McGuinty, asked twice today—asked the Minister of the Environment, asked the Minister of Agriculture—where is the agricultural operations act? This is a piece of legislation that the farmers of Ontario want, that the municipalities of Ontario want, that the citizens who live in rural Ontario want. The minister has talked about this since February 2000. Where's the legislation? The minister couldn't even answer the question today. Had I had the ability under a late show to ask—I wasn't satisfied with the minister's answer today, because the minister didn't give an answer. Where is the agricultural operations act? We need to have province-wide standards for agricultural operations. We do not need to have the checkerboard approach to agricultural operations in this province that exists right now. This government is negligent in not ensuring that this agricultural operations act is a priority among government today.

Without this legislation, do you know what has happened? Your government is pitting urban against rural, and that is sad. We had the Dairy Farmers of Ontario here today, and I hope some of you as urban members on the opposite side start to get a better appreciation for the challenges facing rural Ontario, a better appreciation for the challenges facing the agricultural community in this province. I hope the message that the dairy farmers put forth today gets through to you, but that you know that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario are only one component of a very important agricultural community. We need urban members on the government side to stand up for agriculture, and that's not what you're doing. You sit back and let Ernie Eves and Mike Harris and Guy Giorno cut the Ministry of Agriculture, cut the Ministry of Rural Affairs, and you don't realize the damage you're doing to rural Ontario. I don't know how to get it through your skulls that agriculture is important to this province. You don't recognize that.

I want to tell members on the opposite side, and I've been telling this to members on my own side, that the

Liberal caucus and the Liberal Party of Ontario understand agriculture. The Liberal Party of Ontario supports agriculture. We recognize the important role it plays. To heck with you, because you don't care and I'm not going to stand here and try to drum through your skulls the important role that agriculture plays. It's not worth my while, and I feel sorry for the farmers of Ontario with your attitude.

I listened to the member for Guelph-Wellington speak tonight. She talked about the role that the University of Guelph plays with 1 Stone Road. Where's the member for Guelph-Wellington standing up and speaking for the University of Guelph? The member has visited the animal health lab. This is a lab that's responsible for food safety in this province. This is a division of ag and food that has seen its budget flatlined. They have not seen any increases. They have not seen any increase in new technology. That member has toured that facility. Where is she? Why isn't she speaking up around the caucus table and the cabinet table for that? She's not, and that's a sad day. That's a perfect example from the member for Guelph-Wellington to show the lack of commitment that exists within this government.

I know there's not a quorum present right now, and I don't want to stand up and ask for a quorum call. There are only two members in the House right now, and there should be many more.

But let's talk about Agricorp. It was pointed out by the auditor that there was serious mismanagement of funds, a serious lack of direction from the Minister of Agriculture and the Ministry of Agriculture. We've got Agricorp tomorrow before the public accounts committee. I'm not going to talk about it tonight, but I'm just putting the government side on notice right now that we're coming at you on Agricorp, because you failed the farmers of this province and you failed the taxpayers of this province with the way your minister and your ministry have dealt with Agricorp.

Let's talk about the whole farm relief program that was put in place in 1998 as a safety net for the farmers of this province. Do you know what? Your government has totally messed up this program. There have been so many changes and rule changes that have taken place that farmers don't know what is right and what is wrong. That responsibility lies with the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr Caplan: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Before you do, I just want to remind members that you're not to reference the absence of other members in this House. It's against the standing orders.

Mr Caplan: The member for Simcoe North asked me to check with you whether or not we had a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Is a quorum present?

Acting Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

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Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): As I begin, I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the following: to split the time that our caucus has between—

Hon Mr Baird: You don't need consent.

Ms Martel:—I do for this one—myself and yourself, Speaker, but also to split that time over two periods this evening because, as you will know, Speaker, you are our other speaker and you are in the chair.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? No, we don't have unanimous consent. Thanks, Raminder.

Ms Martel: If it would help that the members would know it wasn't me who called for unanimous consent, I would ask for it again, because the Speaker is in the chair and he won't be able to speak until a later date, when he comes out of the chair, so we can't do this back to back.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'd be happy to take his place in the chair.

Ms Martel: He'd be happy to have you take his place about 11:30 tonight, Mr Gilchrist, if you don't mind, so he can speak.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Ms Martel: Thank you. I'm pleased to be here this evening participating in this debate on extending the hours. Of course this motion will pass. The government will use its majority to ensure that is done. That's really nothing new. For as long as I have been here, we have been sitting till midnight at the end of June and at the end of December. However, if I look at the legislative calendar, I really don't see that the government has enough legislation on the books right now to actually carry us for the next two weeks, so I can only assume that the government is going to find itself in a position of having to time allocate all of the bills that are remaining, and that's why the government believes it needs the extended hours. I'd only say to the government, if they could manage their legislative agenda a bit more successfully, we probably wouldn't have to sit over the next two weeks. But there are others, and the government caucus can blame whoever needs to be blamed for that.

In any event, what we should be talking about over the next two weeks is health care, because health care continues to be a huge priority not only for Ontarians but for Canadians. It certainly continues to be a priority in the riding that I represent, which is Nickel Belt, and frankly across northern Ontario. I want to focus on a couple of issues tonight that have everything to do with health care and express my serious concern that the government is not doing anything on any of these fronts. If the government were seriously committed to health care, as the Minister of Health is wont to say in this assembly, she should spend the next two weeks doing something about all of these issues, or even one of these issues.

The one that I would begin with has to do with comments the auditor made yesterday in his report on the public accounts. I want to call on the government to

come clean with respect to the amount of money this government has actually spent on hospital construction last year, this year and over the next two years. It's interesting that the auditor talked about the government's trickery in this regard. I'm sorry that the Chair of Management Board has left, because he did not want to answer this question yesterday when he had the opportunity to do so. I assume he didn't have an answer and that's what happened. The auditor was very clear that the government is engaged in just a little bit of trickery around this particular issue. In his special report yesterday he talked about this government's approach with respect to multi-year funding. He says the following: "Our view is that this practice distorts government financial reporting," the key word there being "distorts."

He gave one example which I will repeat—he actually gave five—with respect to hospital construction, which I think is an important one. Our community and many others have had a forced amalgamation of hospitals, and our community finds itself in the position right now of having to raise over \$40 million as our part of the local share for this forced hospital restructuring. So I certainly think the government should come clean with respect to the amount of money it has actually allocated for hospital construction, because this minister has told our community that all of the funds have been allocated, there's nothing else, there's no more, despite the fact that our hospital is a regional centre, and a regional centre across northeastern Ontario, for trauma, for neonatal, for cancer, for heart etc. So we have argued that this government should give us more, up to 85%, but this government doesn't want to do that and argues that it has already spent \$1 billion in capital funding.

This is the example that I'd like to use, this \$1 billion in capital funding that the government alleges—and that's the key word, "alleges"—that has been spent in capital construction last year. The auditor said the following:

"As one example of this transaction," that is, this multi-year approach, "the government announced in its May 2000 budget that \$1 billion in capital grant funding would be provided to accelerate capital projects recommended by the Health Services Restructuring Commission." Ours is one of those.

"The determination of the \$1 billion in grants was based on plans submitted by each hospital prior to March 31, 2000, outlining their proposed major capital projects over the next four years." That's key.

"The government signed agreements which each hospital to fund 70% of the cost of the ... projects. Because both the signed agreements and cabinet approval for the transfer were in place prior to March 31, 2000, the government recorded the entire \$1 billion as a liability and expenditure for the 1999-2000 fiscal year. The actual funds were advanced to the hospitals shortly after the budget announcement in May 2000."

The auditor made it clear at the press conference yesterday that in fact there are two problems with this approach. Number one is that this funding for capital

construction extends over a period of four years, not one. But the government, with its trickery, showed all of that spending to have been completed by last year. The second problem, and this is a very serious problem, especially for our community, is that this money, this \$1 billion, will only be spent if the individual hospitals and communities can actually come up with the 30% of the local share that is necessary for the project. I've already explained to you the problem our community is going to have, given the excessive amount of money we have to raise as our 30% share.

The point is that the government has certainly engaged in any little bit of trickery by trying to say it spent \$1 billion in capital last year. In fact, it did not, and the auditor clearly told the media yesterday that even he had no idea how much the government had actually spent on capital construction as a result of the way the government had construed the books—cooked the books might be a better description.

So I'd like the Minister of Health to come clean, to table in this assembly the amount of money that was actually spent on capital construction last year. I suspect it was zero, since the money wasn't even flowed to the hospitals until May of last year. I'd be interested in finding out how much has actually been spent this year. I bet it wasn't much more, because I bet many communities like my own are having great difficulty finding their 30% local share to ensure that these projects go.

It's interesting that the point the auditor made, both in his release and to the media yesterday, was that he firmly believed the practice of charging multi-year funding to current year's operations must cease. I understand that he has put the government on notice that they cannot continue with this unacceptable form of trickery, not only with respect to health care but with education and with the Ontario Innovation Trust, and that the government will actually have to show clearly every year, each year, year in, year out, the actual amount of money that was spent that fiscal year. I suspect if that had been done this year, we would have found that very little money, if any at all, had been spent on hospital construction last year, at the end of 1999, and probably very little spent at the end of this fiscal year.

My second concern has to do with the complete lack of response from the Ministry of Health to a very serious doctor and specialist shortage in my community. You will have some familiarity with this dossier, Speaker, because your community has also been involved in these negotiations. The fact is this: on May 17 there was a very large meeting that took place at the Sudbury Regional Hospital which was attended by the chiefs of staff from my community, from yours, Speaker, and from Thunder Bay, North Bay and Timmins by teleconference. So it was the chiefs of staff of the five regional hospitals in those communities, and in our community some other members of the medical staff as well. This was held with an ADM from the Ministry of Health, the regional health director for Sudbury and a number of other civil servants. The point was to try and impress upon the ministry

bureaucrats there to then impress upon the minister here that northern communities have a very, very serious problem right now with respect to a huge exodus of physicians and specialists from our community.

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In Sudbury, at that meeting in May, this was the story in our community: since January 1999 our community has lost 15 doctors and specialists. That included our only full-time thoracic surgeon and our only hospital-based neurologist. In addition, 22 family doctors had withdrawn their hospital privileges over that 18-month period because of their heavy workload, leaving at least 30% of Sudbury's population as orphan patients, meaning if they came and were admitted to a hospital, their family physician would not be able to provide them with services.

The government officials who attended that meeting, Speaker—and your community was represented because the same thing is happening in Sault Ste Marie; it's happening in all major northern centres—said yes, they understood the problem, and yes, they promised they would give concrete recommendations to the Minister of Health by November 30 so the Minister of Health could act on this crisis. Well, I raised in a statement today and I'll raise it here again tonight that November 30 has obviously come and gone and we have heard nothing from the Minister of Health with respect to concrete recommendations by the government to deal with this crisis. The silence is deafening.

What is worse, Speaker, is that in my community, and I suspect in yours, Sault Ste Marie, the situation since the time of that meeting on May 17 has actually deepened and grown much worse. The chief of the medical staff from the Sudbury Regional Hospital this morning provided me with the following information. We have 14 full-time emergency room physicians right now and we need 20. The present group trying to manage emergency departments is completely overwhelmed and we still have far too many patients considered orphan patients. One specialist in each of the following—obstetrics, general surgery, oncology, paediatrics and orthopaedics—has also left since May, so six more specialists who were not foreseen to leave have actually left in the six-month period since this crisis first began. We still have no thoracic surgeon in place, no hospital-based neurologist in place. The chief of staff estimates that our shortage of specialists is about 30% worse than the provincial average and the hospital also estimates that we have between 15,000 and 20,000 people in the area who are without a family doctor. That's the situation today, December 6.

It has been a week since the government promised it would have recommendations, since the government promised it would use provisions in the government-OMA agreement, for example, to recruit and retain specialists and physicians to our community, and nothing has been done. I say to the Minister of Health, November 30 has come and gone, and where are you and where are your recommendations to deal with this crisis? It is a crisis for people who don't have a physician. It is a crisis

for people who require specialist care are now being flown all over northern Ontario or to southern Ontario to get the care they can't get in the north. If the government thinks that its agreement with the OMA is so good, then how is it that not one of its provisions have been implemented by this government to solve our problem? We wait to hear if the Minister of Health will do anything, despite the promise that was most clearly made to my community and yours and the three other major centres in northern Ontario.

Speaker, this brings me to the point of the physician shortage generally across northern Ontario. I spoke to some specifics in my own community. I'm sure you could speak to specifics in yours. But it raises the very serious issue of the investigation going on now with respect to a northern medical school. You will recall, Speaker, that almost a year ago—it was last Christmas—a report was released by Dr McKendry, who recommended to this government that it seriously investigate the possibility of a medical school in northern Ontario to deal with what has been a very serious problem both in terms of recruitment and retention of physicians and specialists in our community. I supported Dr McKendry's work. I thought it was very important work because it reinforced that clearly we have a physician shortage coming very quickly down the track facing us all in Ontario. The second thing he made very clear is that any number of initiatives have not worked in northern Ontario with respect to attracting and retaining physicians and specialists in our special part of the world and the government ought to look at a different approach to resolve that problem.

So this minister appointed an expert panel, led by—I believe his name is Peter George; I apologize if it isn't. They now have an expert panel that has been underway since about July investigating this very matter. This panel's report has been delayed and I am quite worried about that, because I worry that what will happen is that a recommendation will be made close to Christmas or indeed after we are gone and there will be no opportunity to have an important public debate in this Legislature with respect to the importance of a medical school in northern Ontario.

I get ahead of myself, because I'm assuming the expert panel will make the right decision and will actually recommend a medical school in northern Ontario. But I'm worried about that because I understand that the chair and the vice-chair of this expert panel are attached to medical schools in southern Ontario, so there surely isn't any incentive for them to urge the government to set up a medical school in northern Ontario when they might feel that would drain financial resources from the five medical schools in the south. I was quite concerned that the government set up this panel and put in place a chair and vice-chair who obviously have an attachment to a medical school somewhere else and may not be so independent in their thinking as to recognize the importance of a medical school in our special part of the province.

Be that as it may, Lakehead and Laurentian Universities together have made some excellent presentations both to the expert panel and to various cabinet ministers in this government. The two universities together have worked very, very hard to put together a proposal to clearly demonstrate to the government that a northern medical school in our special part of the province would work and would work in the long term to deal with this very serious problem of recruitment and retention. In fact, they were very clear to say that the government should build on the two family residency programs that are already in place in northern Ontario: one at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay and one at Laurentian in Sudbury. For a number of years those two programs have worked to train, at the tail end, GPs for our community.

I was very pleased to be part of a government that funded the family residency program in Sudbury, where I, as Minister of Northern Development, provided the capital funds and our colleague Frances Lankin provided the operating funds for that program to be established. But we have seen, in terms of the training of physicians that has gone on in those two centres, that 75% of the graduates actually stay in northern communities to deliver health care to our citizens. So it's got a phenomenal success rate in terms of retention, and they are two programs we could build on for a medical school in northern Ontario.

I put my plug in now to the minister. I don't know what the expert panel will say. I hope it isn't that we should just fund more spaces at southern medical schools, because that will not solve the problem in the north, and anyone from the north will know that. I hope the expert panel will have enough vision and, frankly, enough courage to say that if we are going to deal with this serious chronic problem of a lack of doctors and specialists in the north, then we have to train those same doctors and specialists in northern Ontario too, because that is the only way we are going to end this critical problem we have had.

I hope the expert panel will demonstrate that courage and vision. If they don't, then I hope this minister will demonstrate some courage and some vision and agree that it is long past time to continue to throw at the problem initiatives which traditionally and historically have not worked, and that now, since the government certainly has the money to make this a reality, this government should indeed announce a medical school in northern Ontario.

I have no doubt, I have every faith, I have every confidence in those who would be involved in that that it would be a project well worth the \$20-million investment that I understand it would cost. In the long term it would cost the government significantly less, because right now we're wasting—wasting—all kinds of money on incentives that don't work to retain physicians in our community.

If the government is interested in doing anything about the physician shortage in northern Ontario, it could also take off the freeze it has had on the community health

centre program since it was elected in 1995. It would be very nice if within the next two weeks the Minister of Health might do something on that front too, because goodness knows the government has the budget surplus to do something positive in this regard.

In the last five years, I have quite consistently lobbied this Minister of Health and others before her to lift the freeze, because we have a community health centre in our community—and you have one in yours, Speaker; probably one of the largest in the province, and the longest-standing, I suspect, as well, established by the Steelworkers. But the community centre in our community was actually funded by our government. When it was funded by our government, a commitment was made that once the initial site, the main site, was up and running, the government would then flow the operating funds necessary to establish satellites in those francophone communities in our riding where services in French were desperately needed.

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Unfortunately, when this government was elected it froze that funding, so although a commitment very clearly exists to that CHC that funding would be provided to Sault satellite clinics, the government has yet to provide the important operating funding to allow those two satellites to become full CHC sites. I regret that and I think the government has missed a golden opportunity, not only in my community but with respect to the 54 other proposals for community health centres which exist in the province right now. Those 54 include CHCs which are already in existence and are trying to expand and have satellites, or communities like Elliot Lake and others that don't have CHCs at all and are looking for this as a model to provide health care.

Our CHC has been phenomenally successful. We have physicians who work on salary—not fee for service but on salary. They work in conjunction with a number of other health care professionals, including nurse practitioners, therapists, chiroprodists etc. These health care professionals provide not only treatment but a whole series of prevention and health promotion initiatives, so these community health centres are very much wellness centres where people can certainly get treatment, as well they should, through primary care, but also can access a number of initiatives that keep them well, that keep them healthy.

We know, because our CHC has been a classic example and has been very effective as a tool to recruit and retain physicians. In fact, the CHC in my community that wants to expand to a full CHC in the community that's just five miles away from me knows that if they could get the operating funding from this government they could hire three more full-time physicians to work in a community that has been designated underserved for the last seven years. For a very small investment, \$1 million, two communities that are currently underserved could actually get the funds they need to have the physicians in their community so that they would no longer be underserved for physicians.

I say to the Minister of Health again, it's been some five long years now since this freeze has been on. We know CHCs are effective to recruit and retrain physicians to deliver primary care and health promotion. Why doesn't the government, with some of the incredible surplus it has, fund some more CHCs so we can get doctors and other health care professionals into our communities?

I remain very concerned as well about what this government is doing with respect to our critical care air ambulance paramedics. You will know, Speaker, that on October 10 the Ministry of Health issued two requests for proposals for privatization of our air ambulance service. It's important to note that this is a change from what has currently been in existence, because in our part of the world air ambulance service has been provided by critical care paramedics, the most highly advanced, highly trained, highly skilled, and these folks have all been employed as public servants by the public purse.

The government clearly isn't interested in having these trained paramedics work with them any more. The government appears not to be interested in paying them any more or getting the benefit of their highly qualified and professional services, and the government instead has issued some RFPs that would allow this service to be privatized.

I just have to say that it is very clear that this government is prepared to privatize public services at all costs. This is what has become abundantly clear to me through this process with respect to the air ambulance. If you look at the RFPs, and I have, and we raised this with the minister in the House last week, the RFPs make it very clear that this government is quite prepared to put patients' lives at risk. They are prepared to do so, because if you look under the section of flight paramedics and staffing, the government makes it very clear that for a minor financial penalty, that private operator could operate that air ambulance without one paramedic or without both of those critical care paramedics.

Can you imagine, Speaker, if it was your son or your daughter being flown out of Sault Ste Marie to the base in Sudbury, for example? Could you imagine that they would be air ambulated, critical care, maybe suffering because of a motor vehicle accident, a boating accident, a snowmobiling accident, and there might not be critical care paramedics on that air ambulance? This is what the RFP says. I listened with complete astonishment to the Minister of Health last week try and say that that was not true. Well, I've got the RFP right here and it says the following:

"7.2 Reduced Flight Paramedic Staffing. At any time during the term of service, the air operator"—private air operator—"shall have the right to request the ministry, where necessary for operational reasons, for consent to staff each staffed aircraft with:

"(a) one (1) flight paramedic, in which case the ministry grants its consent to the request, the ministry shall reduce the service fee by \$75 per hour or a part thereof ... or

"(b) zero (0) flight paramedics, in which case, if the ministry grants its consent to this request, the ministry shall reduce the service fee by \$150 per hour or part thereof that the flight paramedics are absent."

You can imagine, for a minor fee of \$75 or \$150, this government is quite prepared to put lives at risk. The patients who fly in these aircraft with these trained paramedics are the most critically ill, the people who need immediate medical care, seriously ill patients, suffering injuries from many of those accidents I described earlier. It's very clear in this RFP, which the minister should read, that the minister is quite clear they should be flying around northern Ontario without any paramedics in the back to care for critically ill patients. That is nuts. That leads us right down the road we have been going down with respect to Walkerton. I urge this minister to take a step back from her philosophy of privatization of anything that moves and try and understand how she is going to put patients' lives at risk by this proposal.

The final issue I want to deal with in the short time I have remaining is an issue that our party has been going at for all of this fall session, and it involves the discrimination that this government continues to carry out against northern cancer patients.

I don't know how we can possibly make the Minister of Health understand what it is like to try and access cancer care in northern Ontario, because she just doesn't get it. Obviously the Premier of this province doesn't get it either. That's regrettable, because he's a northerner and he should know better.

The government has consistently refused to pay northern patients the full cost of their travel, accommodation and food to access cancer care if they're not having to access that care out of their region. We have tried to make the minister understand that the region in northern Ontario that people live in and have to access cancer care in is a huge region, double, triple, four times the geographic size of anywhere else that people in this province have to travel for cancer care.

This government is paying southern Ontario cancer patients from Hamilton, London and Toronto, who go to Detroit, Buffalo, Kingston, Sudbury or Thunder Bay, 100% of the costs of their travel to get to the cancer treatment centre—100% of their food, travel and accommodation. Many of those patients, even when they travel to a cancer centre outside their region, when they go from Hamilton to Buffalo, when they go from Hamilton to Kingston, are travelling less than people in northern Ontario travel one way to get to their nearest cancer treatment centre.

I want to raise again, if only to make the point one more time, a specific case of a woman from Pickle Lake. Speaker, you will remember this case because it was the first case that we raised in this Legislature almost a year ago to the day. My leader Howard Hampton raised it, and it's the case of Donna Graham from Pickle Lake. She travelled 525 kilometres one way from Pickle Lake to Thunder Bay to get her cancer treatment. She did that trip 14 times, round trip, in order to access cancer care. One

time she was lucky enough to fly. The other times her husband had to take off work from the Northern Store in Pickle Lake and drive her. Her travel costs alone were \$6,077. She received a sum total of \$2,200 in compensation from the government. She paid over \$3,800 out of her own pocket.

The important point, the point that the minister just doesn't want to get, is this: Donna Graham travelled further by car one way from her home to the nearest cancer treatment centre in her region than any of this government's re-referral patients from Toronto, London and Hamilton who had to leave Toronto, Hamilton and London and go to Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit or Kingston for cancer care. She had to travel further in her region one way than all of them did when they were re-referred to the cancer treatment centre that was outside their region. Donna Graham couldn't get 100% of her costs covered, and I ask this government, why? Where is the justice in this? Where is the fairness in this? Do you know what's even sadder? Donna Graham died about eight weeks ago, before we could get this horrible situation fixed. When we talked to her husband, he said it was his greatest regret, and hers as well, that this horrible discrimination against northern cancer patients was not fixed before she died, but if there was any way that he could continue with this fight to try to get this Harris government to change its mind, then he would do so.

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We will continue to raise this matter and we will continue this fight, for Donna Graham and for every other cancer patient out there who has died before we could get this fixed, who is suffering from cancer now and who will suffer from cancer in the future, because there is nothing fair, right or just about a government that would fully fund 100% of the costs for southern Ontario patients to access cancer care, but at the same time would only agree to pay a small portion of travel costs alone for people who also have cancer but who live in northern Ontario.

The government has tried to justify this in any number of ways by saying it's temporary, by saying Cancer Care Ontario is paying for this, by trying to say that it's a problem with the northern health travel grant and we might fix it. This program has been going on for 20 months now. There's nothing temporary about it. It's scheduled to go on for at least another two and a half years because of the excessive waiting lists for treatment in this province. There's nothing temporary, and the government should pay northern cancer patients too.

It's not about the northern health travel grant, as much as the government would like to use that as an excuse to explain why they have done nothing on this important issue. The northern health travel grant is for all patients in northern Ontario who have to travel, for any number of illnesses, more than 100 kilometres. We are talking about a specific program established by this government for cancer. A specific deluxe program that this government established for cancer patients in the south should be open for cancer patients in the north too.

Finally, although the Minister of Health has tried to say this on a number of occasions, it is not cancer Care Ontario that is paying for this program and it is not the Canadian Cancer Society that is paying for this program. This program is being paid for by a special allocation from this Harris government to Cancer Care Ontario. That has been going on since April 1999. That is why we have made the argument that this government should extend this special allocation of funds to Cancer Care Ontario for northern cancer patients too and end the discrimination now.

As I said earlier, for Donna Graham and for so many others who have been financially affected and who look at a government that discriminates against them when they're already battling cancer and shouldn't have to battle a financial trauma as well, we'll continue this fight. Sooner or later, this government is going to have to admit that it's wrong, that it is discriminating against northern cancer patients and it shouldn't do so any more.

I've tried to outline in the time that I've had at least six areas with respect to health care that the government could deal with over the next two weeks if it wanted to do something positive and something concrete for the majority of people who live in this province.

It certainly would make a difference if the government did something on physician recruitment in our part of the province. It would make a huge difference if the government would finally end its discrimination against northern cancer patients in our part of the province too.

I hope the Minister of Health in the next few weeks, as we sit these late nights, will see the wisdom of doing even one of these initiatives and actually fund one of them as well.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I will be sharing my time—I'm not exactly sure, is this not our leadoff?

The Acting Speaker: Yes.

Mr Conway: So I will take the 60 minutes and I will share it with the shy and retiring member for St Catharines who has to go down and check on his hockey tickets at the bidding. So it's 60 minutes, I presume, and I will share the time with Mr Bradley.

We have before us tonight the calendar motion standing in the name of our friend the government House leader, which essentially tells us we are here until December 21, 2000. I certainly have no quarrel with that. As my father would say if he were here, "You're paid for 12 months of the year's work and it's probably not a bad thing that you show up for at least seven or eight of those months around the Legislature."

I had to think earlier tonight as I was listening to the previous speaker, the member for Nickel Belt—who I thought made quite a good speech about a number of issues affecting her part of the province—how increasingly surreal this place is becoming, and we're not alone. There was a wonderful article in the New York Times magazine the other day surveying the life and legislative times of one Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the retiring senior senator from New York who is completing this month 24

years in that august body. Moynihan was simply making the point how ridiculous the Senate is becoming as a place to debate. I should have brought the article with me tonight, because he says that he's leaving with some regret because it has become a culture war around the place: there is less and less rapport across the aisle; that there are deeper and sharper ideological divisions between members of the Democratic and Republican caucuses.

He tells a story about how basically most of the time, if you go over to the Senate, you'll see some senator speaking to an empty chamber, usually with some props that are made for television. I thought earlier tonight how the member for Nickel Belt had obviously done good work in preparing her speech and really she was speaking to a nearly empty chamber and, dare I say it, most of us who were here—and that was a very small number—weren't paying a great deal of attention to what she was saying. That's becoming the norm, and I ask my friends on all sides, can you imagine, knowing something about the kind of sacrifice that we all make to get here, what a strange and paradoxical state of affairs that is? You work as hard as you all did to win a nomination, to win an election, to come here, and pay less and less attention to your colleagues in one of the places where we're supposed to business.

I'm the first to recognize that there is, of course, more to the business. There is caucus, there is the constituency responsibility. But we are, after all, members of Parliament and an important part of our job, according to political science at least, is that we come on a nearly daily basis when we're in session to meet one another and to debate issues of public concern.

There's a new book by a fellow named Donald Savoie, a noted academic. You may have seen him on television the other night. He has written a book which I would recommend to your attention. It's called *Governing at the Centre*. Essentially, he argues that 30 years ago Pierre Trudeau observed that most MPs were nobodies 50 feet from Parliament Hill. He's arguing, based on a lot of very good evidence from former ministers of the crown, that in fact today in the national capital of the Canadian federation, about 75% to 90% of the cabinet ministers are nobodies at the cabinet table.

It's a really interesting state of affairs, because I know there is within our culture the idea that one gets elected to Parliament, certainly in Ontario, in the hope and prayerful expectation that someday, sooner than later, the phone will ring and some unelected person who is an aide-de-camp to the Premier or to the Prime Minister will call and say, "Mr Coburn, Mr Conway, Mr Martin, you are summoned to the treasury bench," and then meaningful political life begins for the honourable member.

It's interesting. According to a very recent survey of the Canadian parliamentary scene—and I quite frankly am inclined to believe the argument and the evidence advanced by Professor Savoie in his book—not only are MPs increasingly nobodies in the parliamentary precinct, but a majority of ministers are non-entities at the cabinet

table. We are going to have to ask ourselves the question: is there any hope for renewal and reformation of this deeply troubled institution?

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I like the place, strange as it may seem after 25 years. I find it interesting to be here. I enjoy the debate. I thought this afternoon all of the interventions on Bill 147, the Amendment to the Employment Standards Act, were quite good. But I feel more and more like a truly rare bird, and perhaps that says a lot more about me than it does about my colleagues. I simply make the point that we're going to debate tonight, I guess until midnight, a motion that is going to pass inevitably. It doesn't seem to be much more than giving an opportunity for honourable members to walk the picket fence of riding or individual concerns, and I will do that myself in a moment or two.

Let me start by making some passing observations about a couple of items, one of which will be electricity. Before I get to that, I wanted to make a comment or two about the Minister of Finance's second quarter report to the Legislature—to the people of Ontario—which was released earlier this week. I must say, as I indicated earlier today, that it's a very impressive report. We have been told, and the evidence is pretty clear, that well into the second and third quarter of fiscal 2000-01, provincial revenues are robust, to say the least. Growth appears this year to be someplace between 5.5% and 6%. What does that mean? It means very simply that Ontario provincial government revenues will be \$2 billion above budget plan. We are going to take in this year, at current rates, about \$64 billion worth of revenue. That's a very handsome amount of money: \$15 billion above where we were when the current administration took office five and a half years ago.

Mr Dunlop: Keep saying that.

Mr Conway: Oh, no, listen. I think these are some of the best numbers we've seen in post-Second World War Ontario, and we should all be happy, because having been around for a while, I can remember when the overbse was in front of us. I remember those days in 1980-81 when Frank Miller would come and say, "You know, the news is not good. The revenues are going the other way." And certainly the Peterson and Rae governments between 1989 and 1993 faced an even more vivid example of that same painful reality.

I say to my friends in the current government, it should be their prayerful hope and expectation that those days never return. The carping opposition will publicly and privately hope they do, but certainly anybody in government would hope they don't return.

Hon Mr Klees: The revenues were up in the Peterson government.

Mr Conway: The revenues certainly were up in the Peterson years, absolutely, but they turned sharply the other way in late 1989. In fact, I was also looking here at the expenditure line. Program spending under the Mike Harris government is up about \$7 billion.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Oh, well, listen, there's not a government that's not going to point with pride to the efficacy of the appropriations and there are few legislatures that are going to stand in the way. I simply make the point that revenues are up this year by over \$2 billion above the plan, and over the five and a half years of the Harris government they're up now about \$15 billion. I think they've moved from \$49 billion to \$64 billion.

Interestingly, the spending has moved quite briskly as well. Program spending is up by over \$7 billion. It looks like, according to the documents tabled this week, the Ontario provincial debt will have crested last year at someplace around \$14.5 billion, up about 23% since the Harris government took office.

Hon Mr Klees: We predicted it.

Mr Conway: I know you predicted it, and I'm not complaining about it. I'm just observing that we have added over \$20 billion to the provincial debt. Now, we know what debt is, of course. Debt is deferred taxation. Make no mistake about that. The current government has a fiscal policy which is very clear: that tax cuts, in their view, were more important than debt retirement. There seems to be some evidence that in the short term it seems to have worked both politically and economically. I'll tell you something. When you look at these numbers and you ask yourself the question, "What happens if this thing starts to turn south?"—there was some banter here yesterday about those bad old days in the new democracy. I don't say this with any partisan animus, because it wouldn't matter which of us is the Minister of Finance. If those growth rates stop being 5.5% and become 1.5%, and God forbid that interest rates should creep up, the life of the Treasurer of Ontario is going to get very interesting very quickly. It won't take much to turn black ink into red ink. If past experience tells us anything, it won't take much to make a little bit of black ink become a lot of red ink.

As I say, when I look at the phenomenal growth of revenue, it is astonishing. We should be so happy. I didn't bring some of the other documentation—yes, I did. The greater detail that is contained in the 2000 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review indicates again just how staggeringly important is the American economy to us. Fully 93%—let me back up and say 55% of Ontario's GDP now depends on international trade. That's up from 29% 10 years ago. Brian Mulroney, you were right; Don Macdonald, you were right. The Ontario economy in the post-free-trade world has seen its GDP rise on the basis of—our GDP in 1989 was about 28% or 29% dependent on international trade. For us, international trade means 93% of that is with the USA, and almost half of that is the auto sector. But 10 years after the free trade deal was passed, Ontario's international trade, or our trade with the United States, as a share of our economy has gone from about 29% or 29% to 55%. That's a staggering development. It's certainly good in the sense that the Americans are enjoying a boom like they have not experienced in the post-war period, phenomenal expansion over more quarters than ever before. Hopefully, that will

continue. Yes, there undoubtedly were some aspects of domestic policy, both provincial and national, that have helped, but Minister Eves's own data makes plain where the engine is that is driving the growth in Ontario: 55% of Ontario's GDP today depends on international trade, and 93% of that is our trade with the United States, and about 40% to 50% of that is our trade with the Americans in automobiles and automotive parts.

So when we read on the front pages of the financial press, both in Canada and the United States, that things are cooling off at GM and DaimlerChrysler and Ford, we have to be concerned. It looks like it's going to be manageable, and I see that Mr Eves himself was saying yesterday that the R word is not crossing anybody's lips. Let us hope and pray that it doesn't happen. But I just wanted to observe that we have some dramatic increases here.

Just quickly looking at a couple of the line items, I thought members might be interested to know—I'm sure you've all looked at it. I see where our gasoline tax revenues, folks, particularly those of you from rural and northern Ontario—I was struck by the fact that our gasoline tax revenues this year will be \$106 million higher than last year. That's good news: more money to build roads. You know, a lot is being said that we're spending \$1 billion on road improvements, and that's good. But according to this statement, the road-related tax revenues this year to the province are going to be just a little bit less than \$4 billion. We're going to take in \$2.26 billion on gasoline taxes, \$665 million on fuel taxes and \$920 million with vehicle and driver registration fees. I think if you add that up it comes to some \$3.8 billion, and \$106 million of additional gasoline tax revenue this year over last year. So we should be building more roads, we should be improving the highways of southern and northern, eastern and western Ontario.

2100

Do you know something else? We are taking in \$920 million worth of revenue to the province from vehicle registration and driver registration fees. What is this nonsense about making it more difficult, quite frankly, to get tested for a driver's licence? The people of Pembroke and Cumberland and Oak Ridges are making available \$920 million by way of net revenue to the province of Ontario. That's not bad business.

I see in gaming revenues—and this is quite an understated revenue line—we are reporting in the current outlook that we will be taking in \$1.865 billion. I suspect that's about \$700 million to \$900 million less than is truthful, because we're leaving a lot of money in the till over at the gaming commission. God, if there was ever an outfit that deserved either a really good inquiry from the Globe and Mail or, God forbid, this Legislature, it's the gaming commission. Boy, we want to shine the spotlight on the union bosses and what they're earning, but I want to see how the government of Ontario is doing in the mob's business.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Yes, I say to the government whip. You know, it's interesting: we want to get out of all kinds of traditional public business, but we want to pile headlong into the rackets business that the mob has occupied for decades. Isn't that a wonderful irony: get out of schooling, retreat from driver testing, but get something called a gaming commission and go and give the mob some competition in a really good business with high margins. Welcome to Ontario in the 21st century.

Mr O'Toole: Sean, Sean.

Mr Conway: I see my friend from Durham East is somewhat incredulous, but what are we doing? What's our tax policy? Cut the progressive taxes and crank up the gambling taxes. Boy, that must make you popular at church on Sunday morning. That must really go down well with the parson out there in Tyrone, or wherever it is that you go to church.

Let me just take a moment, because my friend Bradley has returned—I want to spend a few moments on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity, and that has to do with electricity. I would submit, and I hope not too self-interestedly, that there is nothing we will have done in the last five or six years that in terms of the economic future of the province will be more important than the deregulation of the electricity sector. It is an extremely important, hugely complicated undertaking. I want to say again that the government of Ontario by the mid-1990s had no option but to contemplate change. To be fair to the Harris government, it set out five years ago, undoubtedly ably led and directed by our friend from Guelph, to pursue a policy the core of which was to insert reasonable competition in the generation of electricity. Would that we had stayed that course, but we've gone in a different direction. We are spending altogether too little time in this Legislature understanding what is going on at the present time with the so-called deregulation.

I see in today's Wall Street Journal an article, "Gas Shortage Likely to Force California to Shut Electricity Plants Temporarily." This is just the latest of articles that are everywhere in the American press, the Alberta press and certainly now with increasing regularity in the Ontario press. Let me just read from this article in today's Wall Street Journal, December 6, 2000:

"Los Angeles

"California is learning there is no 'off season' for the electric industry as an unexpected electrical emergency struck the state despite generally moderate temperatures. The underlying cause of the problem: tight supplies of both electricity and natural gas.

"Yesterday, a top official at the agency that operates" California's "electricity grid said there is a 'high probability' that electrical-generating plants in California could be forced to shut down temporarily within the next few days because of insufficient supplies of natural gas to fuel the plants. Such an event almost certainly would trigger rolling blackouts. It would be ironic if a gas curtailment were the force that finally pushed the state into blackouts—threatened but averted all summer—since the

California Independent System Operator had assumed that it was past the worst danger as temperatures cooled."

It goes on to describe the absolute chaos that's occurring in California, and it's the same in the Pacific northwest. The Alberta government the other day slapped a freeze on their situation. I see the federal government has now launched an inquiry that some of the big players may in fact be gaming the Alberta electricity pool. It's a very serious business. The Ontario Energy Board, in a hearing just a few weeks ago, said on the basis of evidence tendered to it this past summer and early fall, it is their conclusion that customers of Hydro One ought to expect a minimum increase of 13% once the market opens up, presumably some time in the early to mid part of 2001. Natural gas prices are going through the roof. You will know, of course, that there is a growing relationship between the two: 90% of the new electricity plants in the United States are going to be fuelled by natural gas. That's a huge new demand driving up the price of natural gas well into the foreseeable future.

We have a situation in Ontario where, as I say, it was never going to be easy, it was always going to be complicated and controversial, but we're not getting the kind of activity on the generating side. My friend from Lambton today had a statement talking about the ground-breaking at the new facility in Sarnia, and that's a good thing, but we're going to need a lot more of that. One of the assumptions of the new electricity policy, folks, is that with decontrol we are effectively becoming part of a continental energy grid. The American demand is high and getting higher, largely because of economic growth but in some cases because of weather.

We are faced with a situation where we are not getting competition in generation, and what have we got on the other side? We've got this incredible spectacle of Ontario Hydro One, a successor company, out buying up municipal utilities like the Brampton hydro utility the other day, at a price of \$260 million, mostly with borrowed money—to what end? I mean, you heard the auditor yesterday rightly say, "There are some serious financial liabilities that attach to all of this, not just to hydro rate-payers but to Ontario taxpayers." But I ask the question rhetorically. No one said when we got going down this road five years ago that what we needed was a bigger Ontario Hydro retail in southern Ontario. Why, I ask this Legislature, are we allowing the successor company, Hydro One, to go out with money it doesn't have, that it must borrow, to buy up utilities both large and small at a time when we don't have the money, the utility doesn't have the money, we're worried about rates and, most importantly, we are not making any meaningful progress on the critical question, which is to get more generation activity?

2110

Some 70% of your electricity bill is the price of generation, and that's where we started out to get some activity. We're not getting nearly enough activity. We've got to get much more generation capacity into the system if we are to have any hope of bringing prices down over

time. Prices are going to go up; they're going to go up sharply for all classes of customers, unless the government is forced in Ontario, as it was in Alberta and elsewhere in the United States, to intervene.

As I take my seat—I know my friend from St Catharines is getting a little worried—I simply want to say again, the electricity policy of this government is not the one it advertised, is not the one Ontario needs, is absolutely guaranteed to complicate an already complicated subject and, most painfully, is going to drive up electricity prices for residential, farm, commercial and industrial customers in the immediate future to a very painful degree. I ask my friends in the government, when are you going to hold your cabinet to account for what it is doing that it shouldn't be doing and for what it's not doing that ought to be done, most especially protecting customers of this vital resource?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Continuing where my colleague from the city of Pembroke left off, I want to talk about a few issues that I thought under this calendar motion would certainly be relevant, particularly to the people of the Niagara region, at the risk of being somewhat parochial.

I want to indicate first of all, I suspect there are many members of this Legislature who are encountering some of the same problems I'm encountering.

I should tell the member for Gloucester, by the way, that he was successful earlier this evening. Despite the fact that he perhaps didn't think he was going to be, he was successful in a certain matter this evening.

I want to talk first of all about the shortage of doctors. This is a problem we're all going to face. I look around the Legislature and I see people, particularly from areas that aren't major metropolitan areas, who should be worried about doctors. What you have to look at is, everybody in the province, think about your own family doctor and how old that doctor is today. Think of the specialists in various areas. These are experienced individuals, but they're also individuals who may be somewhat closer to retirement than you think.

If we look at the ophthalmologists in the Niagara region, we recognize there's already a shortage of ophthalmologists, and we have a billing cap on those who are there. Some people will say, "Isn't that justified? They shouldn't be able to bill forever for the services they provide." But what they don't consider is that we simply don't have enough ophthalmologists. So those who are there must do even more of the work than they otherwise would have. You'll see that the Ministry of Health will talk about any specialists and say, "You have this many specialists in your area." What you have to determine is how many of those people are working full-time, how many of those people are actually full-time ophthalmologists or surgeons of some kind. You'll find very often that not as many as you think are. I was told by one reliable source that one third of the ophthalmologists are over 65, one third are between 55 and 65 and one third are under 55. We graduate in Canada, never mind in Ontario, fewer than 20 ophthalmologists a year.

As we have an aging population, we recognize that people are going to experience more problems with their eyesight, with their hearing and general health problems. We have an aging population, particularly in the Niagara region, but also, I suggest to you, across the country, so this is something governments are going to have to move quickly to address.

It isn't going to be cheap. This is why I worry. I know members of the government sometimes find us over-critical on this side. I'm particularly critical of tax cuts of the degree and dimension that this government has implemented, because I think we're going to need that money for our health care system. Without a doubt, we're going to need it for the health care system. I think most people in this province, yes, we all like a tax cut but, given the choice, would prefer that the government make massive investments in the health care system. I think they're going to be needed.

In the Niagara region I get calls at my constituency office. I cannot produce a doctor for these people. I can't even say that the government can produce a doctor. I can't say, "Phone the Minister of Health and she will tell you tomorrow that you have a doctor." It's something we have to address. It will not get better; it will only get worse, unless we start graduating more and more doctors and having more come into the system one way or another. That's not only family physicians; that's people in certain specialties. The answer is not the billing caps, unfortunately, they put on, when you have too few physicians or too few specialists.

There was an article in Maclean's magazine this past week that mentioned the Niagara region and other areas, because we have people now who have macular degeneration, people who need operations for cataracts and others reasons, people who could actually lose their sight if they did not have an operation or some medicine available.

That gets to another point: there are drugs and procedures available today that are admittedly expensive, but they will save people's eyesight and they may in some cases even save lives. It seems to me again that most people are more prepared to invest the dollars they have in that kind of system that will save someone's eyesight than they are in a tax cut which allows many people at least to buy something, perhaps an item we would consider to be a luxury rather than a necessity.

We certainly require as well for our CCACs, as we call them in this House—they're the central organization, the community care access centres which channel people who need long-term care into the appropriate long-term care. The funding is simply not keeping up with the kind of demand we have. Again, to be parochial, I'll talk about the Niagara region, which has per capita more people over the age of 55 than any other part of the province of Ontario, to my knowledge. It may be second in Canada. So it's essential that we provide that funding.

There was what I think was a wrong decision made in a couple of ways. This isn't the only government that's made that decision; don't get me wrong. I have never

been a proponent of massive deinstitutionalization in the health care system, and I know that goes against what a lot of the gurus thought 10 or 15 years ago, that we've got to get everybody out of an institutional setting. Well, that's fine if you have the support systems in the community, but there are also some people who are under the illusion that those support systems would be cheaper than keeping people in an institutional setting. It's not the case. Now we face a dilemma. For instance, I know this is controversial, but I think of people who have severe psychiatric problems, and we're not talking about the old movie that perhaps a few of us in this House would remember as kids, called *The Snake Pit*. You'd have to stay up late at night now to see that about 4 o'clock in the morning when they're replaying a very old movie. It's in black and white, not even colour.

Mr Conway: Was it a talkie?

Mr Bradley: It was indeed a talkie. But it described conditions in what they then would refer to as a psychiatric institution.

Well, I'm going to tell you, it changed considerably. There are some people who had the stability of a home, where they didn't have family or their problems were extremely severe. Those people are out on the street now. The members from Ottawa who are here today—members from any community—know that we have a tremendous problem with people who are unfortunate enough to suffer from schizophrenia, and their families as well. I'm sure all of us get a call once a month at least from somebody who is beside himself or beside herself over a member of the family who simply cannot function unless that person has adequate medication to keep that person stable. Talk to some of these psychiatric patients yourselves and they will tell you, "As long as I'm on my medication, I can function in society. I can have a job. I can be a positive part of society." But some who are not on medication have some severe problems.

It ended in one particular case in Ottawa, a high-profile case—we have Brian's Law as a result in this House—of someone who was killed by a person whose psychiatric state was not as it should be. That's happening all over. There are people who phone my constituency office to say, "My son or daughter will be dead in two years," and unfortunately the prediction comes true.

2120

I know there are arguments on both sides of the issue. I don't want to pretend there aren't. We don't want to go back to a situation a century ago where people were confined to what we called "mental institutions" and kept away, and the family and others had oppressive powers. But the pendulum has swung so much the other way that we have to provide help for these people and sometimes it isn't on a voluntary basis. The legislation recently proclaimed by the government goes part of the way toward that, but it is a miserable problem for a lot of people. If you think about families, extended families, I can't think of a family in Ontario that wouldn't be in some way affected by a relative or a close friend who is in this situation. It's something we have to address.

Again, it requires an investment of funds. I wish it didn't, but it does.

I look as well at the ambulance service in our area. I raised the question a week ago today with the Minister of Health about the chaotic ambulance dispatch situation in Niagara. There have been a lot of stories about it since. The Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty, asked the question in the House as well about inequities in specific cases.

What we've had there is this thinking—and again, I know there are some proponents here who believe in megacities. I'm not one of them. Some of my colleagues believe in megacities and some do not. If we canvassed the three caucuses in this House we'd probably find different opinions. My local newspaper, the St Catharines Standard, can turn virtually any issue into an editorial saying that if only we had a megacity, the problems would be solved.

Let me give you an example of where I don't think that mega-thinking has worked, and that is in the ambulance dispatch centres. With an ambulance dispatch centre, you need people who know the local area. The Niagara region is lumped in with Brantford, I believe, Hamilton and other communities around, and you have a central dispatch centre. It was thought this was going to be the very best thing we could have. Well, we find out that the people who work there don't always know the street system. They don't know the historical markers. They don't know the hospital system. Therefore, we have ambulances which have gone to wrong places, been wrongly dispatched. We've had people who may have suffered irreparable damage to their personal health or people who may have died as a result of the system being far from perfect.

I asked of the minister if she would have, as the regional municipality of Niagara has requested, an independent audit done of the dispatch system. The purpose isn't to point fingers. If the audit says, "There's a major problem and it's in the following areas," and we have a Conservative government of Mike Harris in power, my goal is not to point fingers. Frankly, what's not important is whose fault it was in the first place. What is important is how we address the problem. You do it by an outside look: not somebody from the Ministry of Health and not somebody who has a lot of conditions placed on them as to what they can look at. It should be a wide-open inquiry. It should establish what the problems are and, most importantly, come up with recommendations that the government will implement on an immediate basis. That's what I want to see. I'm not pointing fingers at the Premier, the Minister of Health or anybody else on this issue. I think it's too important an issue to fiddle around with in that way. We simply have to address it properly.

A lot of these issues are difficult to deal with. I don't want to pretend they are not. I hear people who are extremely critical of this government, as I am from time to time, but I want to say that those problems are not easy to solve and I don't ever want to pretend that they are.

We have some recommendations from over here. Sometimes they're helpful to you; sometimes you may reject them. But I hope that at least you're open to ideas on the other side. I hope that you're open to perhaps fewer exercises of cutting taxes and more of investing funds. I know people call that spending in many cases. I like to think of it, when it's proper, as an investment.

This government has made some investments in what I consider to be productive areas. Not everything this government does is wrong. Our job in the opposition is to be critical, is to probe the weaknesses, is to expose what we feel are problems. Members of the government have an obligation to present the government point of view. I understand that's the way the House works. I don't really object to people who do that. I expect cabinet ministers, when they answer in the House, to be perhaps defensive in their answers, but I expect when they go behind the closed doors of the cabinet that they may well share with their colleagues their personal concerns about what's happening in the province. That's as the system should work.

Let me touch on perhaps a few other parochial items that may affect others. The Queen Elizabeth Way is jam-packed right now. When I try to come in in the morning with the 12 boxes of stuff in the car, as though I'm going to get home and get it done and come back—that's always a forlorn hope, I might add—it is just a jammed situation.

Is the solution to continue to build more lanes? That's good on a temporary basis.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: Yes, there are others. The member for Scarborough would know that she has coming through Scarborough a major—what is it, 12 lanes now, or 14 lanes, when you consider the collector lanes?—a huge highway up there. I think there's a need for some public transit, like GO Transit. I'm not unrealistic; I don't expect that GO Transit should have the same service from St Catharines to downtown Toronto that it has from, for instance, Oshawa or perhaps Mississauga and Oakville. They're closer; there are bound to be more trains needed. But I do think there's a need for an enhanced service. If it can be done co-operatively between the federal government and the provincial government, good, I'm glad to see that. But I think there should be another option for people who want to come to medical or business appointments in Toronto or for tourist reasons. GO Transit would be very helpful. There may be a need for a mid-peninsula corridor. Certainly the local folks in our area at the municipal level believe that to be the case. I know the government will want to assess that carefully.

The government has to be careful how it makes its commitments in expenditures. I understand that and I'm not one who is saying the government ignores us if they don't proceed the next day when we make a request of that kind, because it is the government's role to assess what all the needs are in the province and then choose on a priority which needs must be met. But in transportation, I think the government should be back into the field of

assisting with public transit, at least in the capital field, if not in the operating. I preferred the system previously. I was once chair of the local transit commission and I appreciated the assistance that was provided by the Davis government, which was in power then, to both the operating and the capital costs of running a public transit system, which allowed an alternative for those who wished to use that kind of transit instead of their own vehicles.

I look at the hospital situation. You've heard me talk about the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines for a long time. I want to tell you, I hated—you know something? There are some predictions that you don't want to come true, but they do. I said at the time, when they were finished—there was a lot of gloss put on it and there were some high fives and a lot of celebration when they didn't shut the doors. I said at the time that what I could foresee was a glorified walk-in clinic. And now we hear announced this week that they're going to take the kidney dialysis out of the Hotel Dieu Hospital. They've become famous for it. It's exactly where it should be. They're going to take chemotherapy, the oncology, out of the Hotel Dieu Hospital.

Interjection: What are they going to do with it?

Mr Bradley: They're going to try to fit it into the general hospital in the other part of the city. I don't want to pretend there will be no service, but I think our city can use two hospitals.

I also don't want to say they can duplicate all their services; they can't. We can't afford to duplicate services. But I think there's a place for two emergency wards. One may be more sophisticated in what it can provide than the other, but two emergency wards. I think there's a need for a hospital to handle what we call regional services, such as oncology, such as kidney dialysis. Another hospital may handle the heart surgery and heart problems, and pediatricians may work at one hospital. In other words, there has to be a division of what they have. I don't want to pretend that there wouldn't be. But I'm deeply disappointed, though I must say I could see it coming. They wanted me to keep quiet. Some people said, "You can't be critical, because the door of the hospital is open." I would say that is a definite problem and I hope it can be resolved in another way.

2130

I want to look as well at privatization. I guess it affects everybody. One of the real problems we've had is with people trying to get drivers' licences. It's particularly kids, and I know there is a specific problem. It's the phasing in—we call it that—of the graduated licence system. Everybody at once started to need those tests, and they've become pretty onerous, to get them. I wonder how many people of my vintage could pass today the test that the kids have to pass when they're finished their five years. It would be pretty difficult, I think, for many of us who simply had to drive around the block and parallel park and do a couple of other things, compared to what they have to go through today. That's a good system. I don't want to say that's not a good system. It may have

some wrinkles that have to be ironed out, but it is a good system.

I want to go back to the issue of the unicity for a minute. I want to commend the Minister of Municipal Affairs to this point in time. He has not forced a unicity on St Catharines and on the Niagara region. As long as you delineate who is responsible for what and you ensure that the regional government has those responsibilities that should be regional and the local government has those responsibilities which should be local, I think that's the way things should be. I don't want to lose the identity. I know people say they won't lose the identity; you do. And it's not the panacea. The Minister of Municipal Affairs now has the book that I recommended to him, called *Merger Mania* by Dr Andrew Sancton of the University of Western Ontario, who pointed out that there are very few examples of real savings with a unicity, and you lose a lot of that local content.

The Conservative Party in Ontario, to its credit—and it was criticized years ago for this—tended to understand the need for local communities and for certain decisions to be made at the local level. I think that is positive. I don't want to see duplication. I think it's dreadful when you see that. But there is a need to preserve those communities, and if we can make sure they're efficient and delivering the services as they should, that's as it should be. I'm sure the member for Erie-Lincoln agrees with me and must be on the inside resisting the tendency of some to have a megacity. I can tell you I have people in my own community who don't agree with me on this, particularly the editorial board of the *St Catharines Standard*, which, as I say, can turn any argument on any issue into a need for a unicity in Niagara. But I beg to differ with them, and I differ with some of my former council colleagues and some on regional council who think a unicity is best for all. I'm not saying there's never a need for some kind of restructuring, but I don't think a unicity in Niagara at this point in time is the answer.

Mr Conway: What does Dr Kushner say?

Mr Bradley: Dr Kushner is also opposed to it. He is on city council now, re-elected. He actually has been on city council so long—Dr Joseph Kushner of Brock University, a prolific writer on matters municipal and economic. He's an economics professor; far too small-c conservative for me, I might add, but he does make some compelling arguments. He is one, for instance, who didn't believe that the city of St Catharines should sell its hydro system. If you sell it, yes, you get the money right away and you've got it for all these projects or you can pretend you're lowering taxes, and then you raise hydro rates and say, "See, we lowered taxes," but the hydro rates go up. So Dr Kushner has been a positive member of city council, as have many other members of city council who have served for some period of time.

I wanted to talk about Mobility Niagara. That was a service for people who have a hard time getting around, people who are physically disabled. It collapsed about three or four months ago. I think it's a good service. I spoke to Brad Clark, the parliamentary assistant, about

the possibility of that being perhaps a pilot project on getting people to non-urgent medical appointments, for instance, so you're not tying up ambulances for those purposes but you're allowing people to have essential services using a mobile system out there. There's always a cost component. I'm not saying there shouldn't be a cost component, but it should be affordable for those people who have to use it.

I want to say as well that the QEW widening is causing some problems in our area, some disruption for people. For the life of me, I often wonder why we have to keep widening some of those roads. The QEW now goes to the edge of St Catharines. We have Highway 406 that heads to the south. It's a four-lane highway for a period of time, to the outskirts of Welland. Then the QEW goes through St Catharines. If you start changing the ramping system, if you start widening the highway through, it's very disruptive to those who have their homes right there, and I don't know what you really gain. I don't know if you really gain that much. It may be that the mid-peninsula corridor can take some of that traffic that would normally go to Buffalo—and it's actually truck traffic—off that highway and ease it. We want people to be able to get to Niagara Falls, which has a lot of attractions. In addition to the casino in Niagara, it has many other attractions. I want to commend, by the way, the Niagara Parks Commission and the city of Niagara Falls for endeavouring to have as wide a net as possible for the purposes of tourism.

Mr Conway: Who plays Bugsy Siegel down at the Niagara Casino?

Mr Bradley: As members of this House know, I have never been a fan of casino gambling; in fact, I think it's destructive of our society.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I agree with the member there. I think he was talking about the slot machines in the corner stores. They have those in some provinces. A lot of the provinces are rethinking—

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Not in Ontario.

Mr Bradley: No, not in Ontario, and that's good. I know they wanted it. I know that they wanted the video lottery terminals in every bar and every restaurant—in every corner store, probably—of every town, village and city in Ontario. But perhaps I played just a little bit of a role in persuading the government—I suspect many government members played a role in stopping that from happening.

Then we had the new Mike Harris gambling halls, the 44 so-called charity casinos which were going to be around Ontario—none, I hope, in Oak Ridges. You see, I always found it interesting that many people who took a moral stance on many issues did not take a moral stance on who this affects, the terrible effect it has on families.

You watch the commercials they have right now, and the commercials are not your fault, but I've watched the one where the guy sneaks out. He ties the bedsheets together and he's escaping from his wife to go out and

gamble. Do you know something? That's not far from the truth in many cases.

Hon Mr Klees: Or it's the wife.

Mr Bradley: And vice versa. You're right, it can happen both ways. I hope they've stopped those commercials. Certainly Woodbine had those for its situation.

We shouldn't be moving in that direction. I know some people say you tax the foolish and they'll say if it's a volunteer tax, we don't have to tax everybody else. But you should see the havoc it wreaks on many homes. I see them now through the back door in the racetracks, and I wonder how many people now are watching the races and how many are playing the slot machines. The big advertising in Fort Erie is "Fort Erie Racetrack Slots" That's the big attraction, as people come in and throw their money in and away it goes. People make their choices, I guess, but I think there are more productive ways to spend that money on essential goods and services.

It's not this government alone. Governments across this country and North America—and I understand why; there's a great resistance to other forms of taxation—have gone to this form of taxation. I think it's tearing at the fabric of our society, and I hope the slowdown I've seen is going to be something that will grind to a halt. I'm not about to tell the minister who is responsible he has to close all the casinos. I'm not an unrealistic person. I just hope that we don't see any further expansion of those opportunities and that we assess what we've already done.

The member for Guelph is here and she would be very familiar with this situation: I think the province should get into the regulation and inspection of retirement homes. That's not cheap, I understand that. She would know from the representations she had—I had some people who came to me and I said that the parliamentary assistant was going to be conducting a review. What the government came up with is a minor step forward, but it doesn't take into account those homes that are simply not great. We know who is in them. They are people whose families have abandoned them very often or they don't have anywhere else to go, so they go to the retirement homes and the situation there is abysmal in many cases. I have seen it and I have had complaints about it. I think we have an obligation as a society to regulate those homes, particularly because there are very vulnerable people in them, often seniors.

2140

I think that one of the steps that the member says has been taken is a step in the right direction, but I think we have to look at all of the homes. I suspect the people who will register for that and who are part of the organization are operating homes that are acceptable. I'm worried about the others that I see out there and people who can't themselves protest very much.

I worry about the assessment situation in the province. People now are getting huge increases in assessment. I guess I'm going to hear more from those who got an increase than those who had a decrease. It's understand-

able. It's always the case. Few people are going to phone to say thank you to the government for decreasing it because they'll say you should have done it 20 years ago. But there are some pretty onerous cases, some pretty substantial increases. I think what is needed overall is the use of more progressive taxes at the provincial level to compensate for the downloading that took place. In Niagara it was estimated last year the net difference was \$18 million. In other words, the additional costs to Niagara, over and above what the province had taken, was \$18 million. That's going to be reflected in property taxes or in what we call user fees, and they do not take into account a person's ability to pay.

I want to say as well I was heartened by the fact that there was some considerable support for saving agricultural land in the Niagara region, particularly prime agricultural land with good soil and where there are good climatic conditions. I know one thing: if you're going to save the farmland, you have to save the farmers. Even though I'm an urban representative by and large—I have some farm people in my riding, but by and large it's urban—I'm a very strong supporter of assistance to farmers. We don't pay in this country what you pay in other countries for food. A farmer cannot get what he or she needs from the price of food very easily. So when there are support programs, I think those of us who are in the urban areas, who predominate in this Legislature, have an obligation to provide appropriate assistance programs to farmers, because once you lose that land, it's gone forever. You're not going to get it back again, and it's important that we have it.

I want to say as well, and probably in conclusion because I think I'd like to deal with a number of other items but this is an important one to me, I have watched the poorest people in our society being denigrated. I am not a left-winger when it comes to this issue. Members of my caucus know that when it comes to welfare fraud or issues of that kind that I am as small-c conservative as you are going to get. Not all of the measures the government has taken have been wrong. When you're trying to help people to get back into the work system, that's good, whether it's through educational assistance, whether it's through giving job opportunities to people, genuine job opportunities. There is a compelling reason to do that, to help people back.

I was told by a government member—I won't say which one—that we're on the wrong side of this issue; I should understand politically we're on the wrong side of this issue. In political life, sometimes you have to be on the wrong side of the issue; that is, you have to be able to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. It is denigrating to say to one segment of the population, people who are unfortunate enough to need social assistance, that they must be tested for drugs.

I know that plays well in some quarters. Perhaps the polling shows that it does. But there are times in our society where, despite the political attractiveness in taking a certain course of action, we must resist because it is right to resist. I hope the government will rethink that

policy so that we don't have further denigration of people who are the most unfortunate and poorest in our society.

I would like to move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour say "aye."

All those opposed say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2145 to 2215.

The Acting Speaker: If there are two of us standing, one of us is out of order and it's not me.

Mr Bradley has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour will please rise.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 14; the nays are 25.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost. Further debate?

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to take part in the debate tonight on the House calendar motion to extend the meetings into December. I'd like to split my time with the member for Scarborough Centre. She would also like to say a few words.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: If some of you want to make your way out quietly, that would be quite permissible. And now if we could have our attention solely on the member for Simcoe North, because he has the floor.

Mr Dunlop: As we talk about the workload a member has here in the House, we obviously have to go to a further week in December to get a lot of our legislation passed. That's very important to the citizens of Ontario.

I'd like to make a few comments tonight on a lot of our municipal partners that are having their inaugural meetings at this time. I've had an opportunity over the last few days to attend a number of inaugural meetings in my riding. In fact I have—

Mr Peters: You're no friend of municipalities.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I think it's bad enough that the member for Simcoe North has to put up with the noise from his own caucus. He shouldn't have to put up with the yelling across and I have no intention of changing the rules to allow that. The Chair recognizes the member for Simcoe North.

2220

Mr Dunlop: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I heard some comments from the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, who continued his fearmongering against our government today and refused to acknowledge the fact that the federal government hadn't made its fair contribution toward the farm relief program. He got quite mad. It was obvious he was quite ticked off when there was some heckling toward him.

I want to get back to some comments on some of my municipal partners, some good friends and former colleagues in the municipal governments in my riding. As I

said earlier, I am fortunate in that I've got one city, two towns and six townships in the riding of Simcoe North. As well, I'm fortunate in that I have two First Nations groups: the Beausoleil First Nation and Mnjikaning First Nation of Rama.

I want to commend some of the people who have run for public office in my riding. For example, in the city of Orillia I'd like to compliment Mayor Ron Stevens. Ron is former mayor of the township of Severn. He has 20 years experience in municipal politics and this year decided he'd like to take the opportunity of running in the city of Orillia. He is a businessman in the city, has done a very good job in business and is a very hard-working person. I was able to attend his inaugural on Monday night.

As well, four of the members of the former council, Councillor George Morano, Counillor Maggie Buchanan, Councillor Wayne Gady and Counillor Tim Lauer, are all returning. This is the first time in many years that the city of Orillia has had a ward system. They also elected this year Francis Smith, a former police officer in the city of Orillia. He is also a former member of the separate school board in Simcoe county. Also elected were Ann Marie Alexander, Ken McLaughlin and Doug Downey, a young lawyer in the city of Orillia.

The meeting on Monday night was very upbeat. I was very pleased to be invited. They have a very positive attitude toward the future. They've had very little in the way of tax increases in about the last eight years. They've done a very good job of controlling taxes and have cut down on a lot of their debt in that time as well. I compliment the city of Orillia.

The township of Severn council, which I used to sit on, is having its inaugural tomorrow night and I'm pleased to be invited to that. I'm also pleased to congratulate former Councillor Phil Sled. He's the new mayor. He was successfully elected on November 13. Sitting with Phil at county council will be Judith Cox, the new deputy mayor of the township of Severn. Judith is a neighbour of mine in the community I live in, Coldwater, and she's looking like she'll do an extremely good job as deputy mayor.

Returning councillors are Mark Taylor, Shirley McDougall and Bruce Stanton. As well they've elected two new members: Doug Beach and Brian Humphries from ward 5. I'm pleased to see these people on council. They're already getting out to a lot of public functions, and although their inaugural is not until tomorrow night they're very well organized. I'm pleased to see that with Ron Stevens and I leaving the township of Severn, they've got some good people replacing us and taking over.

Early Monday morning I had the privilege of attending the inaugural of the township of Ramara. Dr Tom Garry has over 25 years' experience in municipal politics. He's a medical doctor in the small community of Brechin. He has been returned by acclamation this time. That meeting was a very upbeat type of inaugural. They're doing some good planning. They are talking about some future negotiations with their neighbours, the city of Orillia, the

township of Severn and the township of Oro-Medonte, in the hope of finding further cost savings to help the taxpayers in that township.

I'd like to mention that Dan McMillan was successfully elected as the deputy mayor of the township of Ramara. They have two new members. Two young fellows had been elected, Basil Clarke and John O'Donnell. It's their first time on municipal council and they've got a very positive attitude, along with former members Neal Snutch and Nadir Jamil. Nadir is a pharmacist in the town of Brechin, and Marilyn Brooks is returning. So I think it's very nice that we've got these type of people on council.

Like I said earlier, I have a number of municipal councils. I for one, with a municipal background—I know not everybody in the House may have as strong a feeling toward municipal councils as I do, but I think they are good partners. We have good friends on councils. For the councils I'm working with, I had a very strong, positive feeling on everything I talked about the other day, and everything before and after the meetings. I was pleased to see the attitude and the ability of these people in making decisions. They've got good fiscal plans in place; they are looking for any way they can to save the taxpayer further dollars. At the same time, they are putting programs in place that are important. They are looking at their water systems and their sewer systems and their fire departments and all the things that municipal governments are responsible for. They're looking at it in a very, very positive way.

I've been at a couple of other inaugurals. I'm going to one tomorrow night in Severn.

My wife is going to be acting on my behalf. It's the first time she's been to an inaugural council meeting representing myself, and she'll be attending the township of Tay, where she'll say a few words. She's a little nervous about going to this meeting, but there are a lot of good friends and colleagues on the township of Tay council. Returning is Jack Hunter as the mayor. David Walker has come back after missing a term. Michele Gouett, Blair Whittaker, Scott Warnock and Michael Ladouceur are all part of the 2000-03 municipal council.

I know the time goes on with the calendar motion. We need to see a lot of this legislation pass before Christmas. I'm certainly not afraid to sit here until Christmas Eve. I know that it's very important to the citizens of Ontario. These are issues that affect public safety, that affect financing and that affect the health and security of our citizens of the province of Ontario.

I will now bring my comments to an end, and I'd like to turn the final minutes over to the member from Scarborough.

Mr Gilchrist: I'm pleased to add a few comments to this important motion because it bears noting that in our first session we set a record for the most days that Parliament ever sat in a year. I'm very proud of that accomplishment.

I'm similarly proud of the fact that, despite some of the suggestions from members opposite, we have sat

more hours in committee than any government in the history of the province. In fact, I remember seeing a chart that showed that during our first session we'd given a considerable number of hours of debate to all aspects, second reading and third reading. Perhaps the most glaring distinction: we had an average of almost two hours of debate for third reading. The average under the Liberals had been five minutes. Five minutes. I mean, it's just as different as day and night.

I am very proud of the fact that whether it's in this chamber or in town hall meetings, in meetings with our chambers of commerce and with small business or with individuals and groups, we have demonstrated a willingness to take the time and apply the effort to make sure that when we come forward with legislation, it is soundly debated and thoroughly researched. We canvass the opinions of people all across this province, pro and con. At the end of the day, we're confident that the end result, after third reading, meets the test of being the best possible solution to the issue at hand.

I know the House leader for the government is facing the challenge of dealing with a number of very important pieces of legislation over the next few weeks. I would be surprised if a single member opposite did not share our interest in seeing bills such as the bill that would regulate the sale of imitation firearms—I know the Liberal private member's bill had followed a similar vein, so it would be somewhat ironic if they would suggest we should truncate debate, we should cut it off and not have as much time applied to that bill in this House as we could possibly muster before rising at Christmas.

2230

There is of course an act, Bill 132, that provides for the first time ever the option for community colleges to issue degrees, not just diplomas. We heard in the committee hearings, the three days of hearings that we just went through here in the building, that every community college supports this initiative. Every one of them believes the time has come for us to be able to offer degrees that are every inch the standard that graduates in the United States or in Europe would be offered. We must recognize that we are competing in a global marketplace. We cannot disadvantage our students. The fact of the matter is, the course content in our community colleges already is on a par with many other institutions around the world, but they have been unfairly constrained from using the word "degree," from offering an applied degree and giving their graduates an equal footing out in the workplace. We think the time has come to fix that. Bill 132 will do just that.

Of course, we have a bill that will continue in second reading debate for the made-in-Ontario tax system. I can tell you, I could use the whole 20 minutes in rotation to talk about the various tax initiatives we've pursued. Why anyone would want us to abbreviate the discussions on that bill is beyond me.

I would challenge the members opposite to show me the people in their riding who have faced a tax increase since we were elected. That would be a very tough

challenge to meet, because every single Ontarian has benefited from tax cuts, whether it was the average 30% income tax cut or any of the other 166 tax cuts that we have brought in in the last five years, whether it is small business or big business, whether it is someone who derives their income from a cellphone business or from a salary that they earn at someone else's company. Here in Ontario we have gone further than any other jurisdiction in Canada to remove the odious tax burden that was stifling initiative, that was driving people out of our province, that was quite frankly lowering our standard of living. The reality is, we have put vast sums back into the pockets of the taxpayers in Ontario.

Mr Chudleigh: Putting debt on our children.

Mr Gilchrist: For too many years, unfortunately.

As we cut our taxes, the federal Liberal government, in some case to the penny, applied tax increases knowing in advance, because our budget had come first, what we were planning to do for the next tax year. Many people—

Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Do we have a quorum? Please check.

The Acting Speaker: Would you check and see if there's a quorum present.

Acting Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Acting Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough East.

Mr Gilchrist: I know it is absolutely against the rules of this House to mention that someone is not here. So I guess in citing the converse, I hope Mr Caplan, the only Liberal who is here, had an opportunity to perhaps marshal his thoughts for the response that will come after our speaking rotation.

The fact of the matter is that our government, having cut taxes 166 times, has actually seen our revenue increase by billions of dollars. Our research shows that every jurisdiction in the world that has ever cut marginal tax rates, going back to John F. Kennedy, a Democrat in the United States, has actually seen an increase in their tax revenue.

Our opponents would rather have more people paying more tax. On our side, we have actually taken hundreds of thousands of Ontarians off the tax rolls. So you have the reality that we have fewer people at that end of the spectrum paying tax, everyone above that income bracket paying a lower level, but because so many more people are working—830,000 more people are working in Ontario—almost the population of Peel region and Durham region combined in five short years has gone from being unemployed to having a stable job. In a province whose economy has grown faster than not just any other jurisdiction in Canada, not just greater than any jurisdiction in North America, our GDP has increased by a greater amount every year for the last four years than every industrialized nation in the world.

Math class was a couple of decades ago, but I seem to recall that you can't do better than being number one. I am chagrined every time I hear from my colleagues opposite the doom and gloom that is the hallmark of their comments. If they would at least recognize the success stories that are out there and temper their universally negative comments that way, they would be accorded a lot more respect by the members on this side of the House.

The people of Ontario have figured it out. They proved that in the 1999 election. They're proving it by going out and, I'm sure, having this Christmas shopping season even bigger than the one before. Every year we're setting records. Consumer confidence is at an all-time high; business confidence is at an all-time high. Vast new investments are being made, whether it's in office buildings or shopping centres, or people just buying new or bigger homes. Every part of our economy is growing, and that's why we believe we should be in here right up to the very last sitting day before Christmas, doing whatever it takes to make sure that every one of these important bills is moved all the way through third reading and gets royal assent. It is critically important that we don't lose the momentum we've built up in the last five years.

This isn't about philosophical differences in the chamber. This is about making sure that 11 million Ontarians continue to see their lives advanced in ways that go from better health care to the best-quality education to actually having more money in their pocket. That is the goal the members on this side of the House have. I have to believe that in their heart of hearts even the Liberals and the NDP would share those goals. It is critically important. We have made investments in first and second reading and on some of these bills have had extensive committee hearings. We must have this extra week to move these bills forward to third reading. We must make it clear to individuals and to businesses all across Ontario that we're going to apply ourselves every minute it takes to eliminate barriers to increase prosperity in our province, to continue to make sure that when a problem is identified, this Legislature comes up with a solution in a timely fashion. We can't afford to wait until next spring. We can't afford to take any kind of a break. We've got to do everything possible to make sure Ontario remains the best place to work, live, invest and raise a family.

2240

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity tonight to put a few thoughts on the record, first of all about this motion that's on the floor to extend the sittings to December 21, and then to share some thoughts on some other subjects, which members of all parties have done this evening, that I think are of concern and of interest to the population out there as we struggle to maintain, in this precinct, good government.

I'm not sure what this government wants to bring forward before December 21. Everything they've brought into the House since we came back in the fall has been ultimately and finally time-allocated, so we really didn't

have the kind of debate that we're used to in this place, nor were we afforded the opportunity to take these pieces of legislation out to the public, which was the standard procedure of previous governments over a long period of time, so that we might hear, from those whom we govern or speak on behalf of, what they think of these particular pieces of legislation, and then bring them back and have further debate after hearing those comments so that we might put in place that which speaks to legislation that supports the common good, that which serves all of us who call Ontario home.

There are a few things on the agenda over the next couple of weeks. Most of them are time-allocated. From what I understand from our House leader, there are some holes in that schedule. We're not sure what the government plans to bring forward to fill those holes. We're concerned that it will be more legislation that will have a very severe impact on the lives of all of those we represent and want to make sure we serve in their best interests. We're wary and afraid that, given the track record over the last five and a half years, and particularly over the last couple of months, they'll bring that legislation in and, because they push the envelope up to a couple of days before Christmas, they will time-allocate as much of it as they possibly can and then push the rest through, knowing that there a lot of people around the floor here who are going to be anxious to get home to their families to celebrate the season that is almost upon us.

That concerns me. It's not a good way to do business. It's a habit that I think has fallen into place in this place over quite a period of time now. I don't think it's a good way to do business. I think the business of this province should be done in a more thoughtful and timely manner, where each side has a fulsome chance to put their thoughts on the record. I think we need to be doing business in a way that takes what we propose here as regulation that will apply to everybody and bring it out for public consultation in the intersession, which was the way we did it when we were government. I remember every intersession looking forward to getting out there to various and sundry communities across this province to meet the people, to hear what they had to say about different initiatives we were bringing forward so that we might then develop some amendments and bring them forward and have discussion about them with the opposition and ultimately put in place legislation that was in the interests of the common good in this province. However, that's not the way we've been operating over the last short while.

I can only guess that the reason we're extending the time that the House sits to December 21 is because this government has a couple more pieces of legislation they want to bring in, probably time-allocate and then jam through just before the Christmas break. I don't think that serves us well at all. As a matter of fact, I think we've seen some of the fallout of that kind of legislative process in this province, none being more visible and dramatic and obvious than some of what has happened within the Ministry of the Environment and the ultimate deaths of

people in the community of Walkerton. But that's not what I want to speak about tonight.

I want to speak about the economy and the lack of effort by this government to actually take advantage of, yes, some of the good things that are happening out there to stabilize the economy of this province so that everybody benefits from it, so that everybody feels confident and secure about their future, so when there is a downturn, as there ultimately will be, particularly if the US economy that we're so dependent on goes into the tank in any significant and serious way—and I'm led to believe by reading some of the papers that there are beginning to be signs that that is what is beginning to occur—we in Ontario, who have an abundance of natural resources, including the gift that we are, the talent that we've developed collectively in ourselves, in our communities, in the people that call Ontario and Canada home—if we're not tapping that, and organizing it in a way that will serve us in the long term, will help us develop an economy in the long term that is sustainable, that includes everybody, that includes the abilities and the giftedness of each of the people who call Ontario home, and at the end of the day rewards all of us appropriately such that then we can then live lives with some dignity, some security and some confidence that, even in our old age, we will still have some comfort and be happy that our children will have jobs and be able to look forward to participating in the economy in the way that we've seen evolve over some number of years now.

However, Mr Speaker, I have to tell you that I am concerned. I'm concerned because this government doesn't seem to have any vision where the economy is concerned. It's a very simple approach that, yes, so far, particularly in the 905 belt of this province and the larger centres, has worked for some people. But it's not working for people in northern Ontario, and I suggest to you that if you talk to anybody who lives in rural Ontario or represents constituencies in rural Ontario, they'll tell you that it's not working really well for them out there either. Farmers in rural Ontario are our main producers, are our main economic engines, and if you talk to them today you'll find that they're anxious, nervous and worried about the future.

I have to tell you too that as I walk around the city of Toronto when I'm serving in the Legislature I meet a lot of people as well. I read in the papers the letters to the editor and I find that there is, even though a good economy is happening in this part of the province, a lot of nervousness about what it means in the long haul. People who used to have good, secure jobs, taking advantage of some of the natural ability that they brought to that job, taking advantage of some of the education and training that they were afforded by way of the publicly funded education system that we put in place in this province—they're more and more anxious that the job that they had or hope to have may not be there for them, and if it is there, it may not be there for very long, because a lot of the very good, secure jobs that came with a good paycheque and some benefits that would help with the health

care of loved ones, that came with, at the end of the day, a pension package, are few and far between. People are worried about that.

That's the kind of economy, because of the lack of involvement and leadership and understanding of this government, that we're turning our province over to, and I have to tell you it worries me. But I'm not the only one worried about it. I recently participated in a forum with some people about the economy that we're in and at that forum there was a distinction made with the economy that everybody seems to be infatuated with at this moment, that certainly this government is supporting almost to the exception of anything else, and that's the economy that we call e-commerce, what I often refer to as the virtual economy. Jim Stanford, an economist with the Canadian Auto Workers, has a way of describing the current frenzy over what he calls a paper economy which has no basis in our everyday reality. On the one hand you've got hyper-inflated Internet company stocks going through the roof, and on the other hand you have a stagnating real economy that is characterized by lingering job and income insecurity. I suggest to you that's the kind of malaise that exists in many of the very vibrant and vital communities, particularly in rural and northern Ontario, that used to be the backbone and the foundation upon which the economy of this province was built, and I suggest to you that will once again in the not-too-distant future be the reality. But if, as a government, we do not understand that and do some things to make sure we maintain that economy and help it adjust to the present reality, it will be very difficult to bring it back to its previous state.

2250

Some may wish to think the paper economy is the embodiment of nirvana, but the majority of our economic resources in the new millennium will continue to go to the production of goods and services. We mustn't lose sight of that fact. The real question about the new economy is this: does it improve our quality of life, our standard of pay, our security for the future? If people are being honest with themselves and with each other and ask themselves those questions, I think they will begin to realize that it's not as some across the way would paint it.

The answer obviously greatly depends in some sense on who you are. If you are John Roth, CEO of Nortel and Canada's leading advocate of low taxes, especially on stock options, you will get \$20 million in after-tax profits due to this year's federal and provincial tax cut changes. So if you're John Roth, you're pretty happy with the new economy and you're pretty happy with governments' new tax rules within that new economy. If you were among the top 20% of income earners in Canada in 1998, you had a much better year and decade than anyone else. After-tax incomes rose by 4.1% between 1997 and 1998.

On the other hand, if you're poor, the depth of poverty is getting worse, not better, even amid growing prosperity. If you were a single mother with no employment income in 1998, your average income fell between 1997 and 1998 from a measly \$7,456 in 1997 to a paltry

\$6,513 in 1998. People in the bottom 20% of the income scale experienced a real income decline of 12.6% over the past decade.

This is the fundamental contradiction inherent in the new economy. Amid the hype over the dot-com economy and Who Wants to be a Millionaire television programming, we have the stark reality of poverty, and of ever-deepening depths of poverty.

There are a whole lot of people who are not sharing in the prosperity the way they did in previous decades when the economy was good and employment was on the rise. The 1990s marked the era of the non-standard job, where self-employment was the single fastest growing job niche, followed by temporary and contract work. What we're seeing in this new economy is the rise of economic Darwinism, where only the financially fittest make it to the finish line and get to claim the prize. The new economy is about who gets included in this era of prosperity and it's about who gets left out. Some people may even make the link between violence against women and increasing poverty.

A person I spoke to, living with a disability, pointed out that the majority of unemployed or underemployed workers in Ontario have disabilities. They are simply not being invited to share in the wealth of jobs that have suddenly been created. Mr Speaker, if you've been paying attention to some of the discussion that's gone on in this House over the last few weeks, particularly in question period, you'll understand that some of us are frustrated by this government's lack of understanding of the need for an Ontarians with Disabilities Act that actually gives people with disabilities some opportunities to take advantage of some of the possibilities that are out there for them.

The lack of leadership in that area is symptomatic of this government's lack of leadership in almost every area where the economy is concerned and, in particular, in making sure we're taking advantage of all the abilities that are out there in the people who call Ontario home, maximizing the potential for us to use the resources we have to create an economy that is good for everybody who lives in Ontario.

Jim Stanford, the CAW economist, points to the role of monetary policies in the new economy and governments' deliberate maintenance of high unemployment to keep productivity levels in check. "God help us" Stanford quipped, if "an outbreak in mass prosperity might occur and someone other than a CEO might get a raise!"

People point to the need to pressure governments and corporations to hire for real jobs in this new economy, rather than simply funnelling profits into the never-ending spiral of stock options and hyperinflated paper economies. A lot of people would prefer to have a full-time job with benefits rather than the insecurity of contract work or even self-employment. In the United States, for instance, economic prosperity quickly translated into real job growth and self-employment numbers declined rapidly, but that hasn't happened here in Canada because there is no leadership at the government level where the

economy is concerned. It's simply, "Follow the leader. Take advantage of whatever falls off the economic plate of the US and ride the coattails," but don't learn anything from what they're doing there or what they're doing in some other very successful jurisdictions across this world.

Whether you want to work at home or in a full-time job somewhere outside the home, the one thing we all share in this new economy is a desperate need for stability: for social stability, for stability in our communities and for economic stability within our families. We're surrounded by so much insecurity that we're telling 20-somethings to start squirreling away money into RRSPs so they can have something when they're forced into early retirement and have no public pension to rely on.

Clearly there is something very old and familiar about this new economy. It is still about the same power relationships that characterized the Canadian economy long before the great market crash of 1929. Clearly the challenge is to start talking about redistributing power and minimizing the extent of the misery and dislocation that have been growing in Ontario in recent years. The key to economic justice lies in social justice, in a sustainable economy that protects and respects our environment while offering a greater level of security for everyone, not just for the John Roths of this country.

Instead of talking solely of economic fundamentals and corporate profits, we need to shift the debate to fundamentals for people, so that the economic prosperity this province is currently enjoying is something that is shared by everyone. That, sadly, is not the case today.

It wasn't that long ago in this province when the government really understood what it needed to do, when government took its responsibility to give leadership seriously and did some things, for example, in northern Ontario to take out the very deep lows and high highs of the cyclical economy that was happening up there.

We put in place instruments that communities and people in northern Ontario could use. As a matter of fact, governments put in place instruments for rural Ontario too that they could use to take advantage of, to bring people together around economic challenges, so that we could all participate in analyzing the problem and in the end claim some important role in the resolution or the solution we arrived at.

For example, in northern Ontario, we, as a government, a few years ago put in place the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, but under this government it has become a shadow of its former self. The first thing to suffer was a very well connected, dependable, coordinated air service to almost every small community in the north. Places like Kirkland Lake, Wawa, Chapleau and Hornepayne had regular air service, with safe Dash-8s flying in on time, connected to the bigger centres of Thunder Bay, Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie, so they could move on from there in a timely fashion to Toronto and do business.

Any community that expects to participate in the economy that's coming at us today has to have air service, has

to be connected by air to the larger centres if they are going to be able to do business in a timely fashion. Alas, because of the initiative of this government to save \$5 million—imagine, to save \$5 million—they shut down norOntair. That's just one example of the lack of understanding that exists across the way, and the lack of commitment and leadership from this government in making sure the north participated actively and in a vital and vibrant way in the economy we're all moving into in the new millennium.

We were told at that time that the private sector would pick up the slack, which is the answer to so many of the difficulties we face as government here today whenever we bring it to the government. "The private sector will do it, will do it more efficiently, will actually make a profit at it, and we'll all be better served." This is one example that has to be obvious to anybody of where that has not actually happened, because the private sector has not picked up the slack, and most of those communities today are in jeopardy of losing their airport. If they lose their airport, they lose the potential to evolve and develop and diversify their economy.

2300

They also lose access to air service for health care, and it gets even more difficult than that, but I don't have time tonight to get into it. Suffice it to say that lack of understanding and lack of leadership—as a matter of fact, reversing the leadership that government had been giving in northern Ontario—has led now to a very difficult circumstance for a whole lot of very important small communities where people have made investments in homes and small businesses and many other things.

The ONTC continues to try to be relevant, but this government is not allowing it to do that. It's not giving it the resources. An article came out in this week's papers to suggest that even the train that connected Cochrane with Toronto, that so many people who live on that Highway 11 corridor depend on to get back and forth to the capital of our province, is in jeopardy of closing as well now. They're going to put buses in. But we know what happens there. It will be the same scenario as with the airplanes. It will be turned over to the private sector eventually and they'll just do the routes that prove profitable. At the end of the day a transportation system, which is essential to any future we will have in northern Ontario, will be gone. We'll be left dependent on our own resources to get around. This government will have failed and, because they will have failed, those communities will fail. I guess we'll all just pack up and move down to Toronto because that seems to be where all the action is anyway. I don't think, in the long run, that's going to be good for this province.

I just want to put on the record one other incident of lack of leadership. When you consider what we did when we were government in so many of the communities of northern Ontario that were struggling under the strain of the tremendous recession that we felt in the early 1990s, which the member from Renfrew spoke about earlier tonight—our government came in and in every instance

brought people together around the table, gave leadership, brought in the banks and worked out solutions to those very difficult challenges that did not in any way incur countervail action from any other countries—the US, for example—and many of those businesses that we restructured in those days are doing tremendously well today. Some of them are still trying to find their feet, and hopefully eventually will, but many of them are doing tremendously well because government came in and gave leadership, government brought resources to the table and government brought people together.

Alas, this government doesn't seem to understand that that's a winning formula. What they figure will work is if you take enough away from people, if you push people hard enough, if you punish people and you make them anxious and nervous enough about their future, they'll do whatever it takes. But I have to tell you that that's a bad formula. It's a formula that is not being used in other jurisdictions and it won't serve us well. For example, instead of bringing organized labour to the table—as they are doing in the United States and Europe these days, because they understand that they need all the resources they can get their hands on at the table—this government is targeting organized labour and diminishing their ability to participate and play a role. Alas, I think we'll all reap the reward of that.

If this government had some good ideas, had some new initiatives, had some legislation that it wanted to bring in that was going to increase the ability of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines to get out there and work with people to make sure we're maximizing the potential that we have to involve everybody in the new economy, and to make that new economy work not just for the 905 around Toronto but for every community across this province, I would be willing to stay right through Christmas. But I don't think that's the plan. I don't think that's what they have in mind. I'm not sure what they're planning to bring down, but I sure of this: whatever it is, they'll jam it through and, because they've jammed it through, it won't be well thought out and I don't think it will be good for the people of Ontario.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak. I want to thank you, Speaker, for filling in for me for the time that you have, and I assure you I'll be there in a couple of seconds.

Hon Mr Klees: Speaker, in light of the fact that there has been a motion by the Liberals this evening already to adjourn the House, and in light of the fact—

Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would draw your attention to the fact that there has been a scant four hours of debate. We have many speakers in this House. We would really like to debate this motion. I think the chief government whip is about to move closure. I think it would be highly inappropriate—

The Acting Speaker: That's quite a speculative item at this point and it's not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Oak Ridges.

Hon Mr Klees: Thank you, Speaker. As I was saying, in light of the fact that the Liberal Party once this evening already has moved adjournment of the House, in light of the fact that there are no NDP members in the House, and we have had extensive debate on this issue, I would ask that you call the question.

The Acting Speaker: I want those who are here as well as those who are watching to understand that this is a very important request. It behooves this Speaker, this person serving as Speaker for you tonight, to make an informed, very intelligent decision. I want to assure you that I am capable of doing that but I will be taking a five-minute recess before I give you my answer.

The House recessed from 2307 to 2313.

The Acting Speaker: I want to address my comments to the minister from Oak Ridges. I'd like to advise you now that I'm not granting the request.

Further debate?

Hon Mr Klees: I would like to split my time with the member for Scarborough Centre.

Speaker, I appreciate your ruling, and obviously that is something we're going to accept. I raised the issue with you because earlier in the evening it was the Liberal Party who moved adjournment of the House. The only conclusion I could draw from that was that they were prepared to have the question put, that they were finished debating this issue. As is typical, obviously their motion was not consistent with their intention. I have also observed in this House—and now, although I won't refer to any particular member, because that would be inappropriate—I look at the seats opposite and I see no members from the NDP caucus here. I simply drew the conclusion—

The Acting Speaker: You can't do indirectly what you can't do directly. The standing orders of this place state that you do not refer to other people not being here.

Hon Mr Klees: I simply drew the conclusion that perhaps there was no further will on the part of the opposition to debate this motion before us. I will say this to you: it is the intention of our government to extend the hours in which this Legislature would sit so we can fully deal with a number of items that are on the agenda. There are a number of bills that we feel are important to the people of Ontario, that we want to ensure are passed into law before we rise for Christmas. I know the member for St Catharines would be willing, in fact, to sit through the entire Christmas holidays. There are probably one or two other members of the Liberal Party who would be willing to do that as well. But that's where the confusion is. If on the one hand they'd be willing to do that, why would they have moved a motion to adjourn the House motion here earlier this evening? If the members of the NDP caucus would be willing to work beyond the set calendar, why are they not here this evening, not a single member?

Having said that, we certainly are willing to do the work of this House. We're willing to debate; we're willing to come back to do whatever has to be done to meet the needs of the people of Ontario, to pass the legislation that is on the calendar, and we will do that. I

am disappointed that the members opposite would not be willing to work with us co-operatively, but that perhaps is the nature of this place.

I'm going to pass the floor to my colleague, who I know will have some very important things to say about this motion.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Scarborough Centre.

Applause.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I must admit it's very nice to get such a warm round of applause at such a late hour. I'm particularly pleased to join in the debate around the House calendar motion.

I think it is important, as we go through these proceedings, that we visit the amount of outstanding government legislation that still needs hasty passage prior to Christmas. There are several items that I'd particularly like to speak to, if only because I know, for example, the Social Housing Reform Act, which went through the justice and social policy committee last week, actually was addressed by many housing interest groups, ranging from representatives, including my own councillor in my riding of Scarborough Centre, who is the chair of the community and social service committee for Toronto, and many other housing advocacy groups, co-op groups, municipalities, AMO, for example, all of whom came to us and said, "We appreciate the need for you to get on with this. We're anxious to know what the rollout is going to be, what the legislation is going to look like. We appreciate that you've gone through a lot of Who Does What exercises. We want to get on with delivering services at the local level so we can address the local needs of our communities."

2320

It is really important for us to pass this legislation so that we can begin with our planning, especially given that there are many new councils across this province that really want to get on with the business of delivering the services for which they are responsible. It is important that we listen respectfully to our partners like municipalities, certainly our social service agencies, and get on with the business at hand.

The Social Housing Reform Act was developed as a result of the Who Does What exercise that was carried out in 1997, when our government restructured the allocation of costs and responsibilities to serve the citizens of Ontario at both the provincial and municipal levels. As you know, the municipalities have been paying the cost of social housing since January 1998. What this particular legislation will do is that it will give the municipalities the say for pay they have been asking for and that they expect us to provide.

The province has direct control of public housing ownership, management and administration. This legislation, when passed, will make it easier to transfer this portfolio to the municipalities. At our committee we heard from many non-profit and co-operative housing deliverers. This bill will harmonize and streamline before those are transferred to the municipalities. This staged

transfer will allow service managers to develop the necessary skills, the experience and the capacity to assume administration of the rest of the social housing portfolio. We know that these are three key benefits that have been identified by our transfer partners and certainly are enshrined in this legislation which we'd like to get passed.

It puts a local service back into the hands of the community so that it more effectively reflects the needs of that community. The municipal authorities can more effectively integrate this service with other locally delivered social services so that their clients can be better and more effectively served. The responsibility for bricks and mortar will be in the hands of local governments where it more appropriately belongs. Having sat on Scarborough council for 12 years, we developed a property standards bylaw that really reflected the housing stock that was within our particular municipality and we understood the need of the tenants and the residents living in that bricks and mortar.

Recommendations for program streamlining and devolution were developed with extensive input from a stakeholders advisory committee, from three working groups, from a social housing committee and from a municipal reference group. The government is actively working to find ways to increase the supply of social housing in Ontario and it is trying to get other provinces and other levels of government to deal with the decline of private sector construction of affordable housing. It is also encouraging the industry to get back into building affordable housing.

I've spoken very briefly on what is a very important issue in my riding of Scarborough Centre. Clearly, it has been identified by the municipality of Toronto as a key priority. They want us to get on with passing this bill so that they can get on with delivering this particular component effectively and efficiently to my residents as well as all the residents across Toronto. I would urge this House to pass this motion this evening.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I have been listening to the debate. I've been here for a number of hours and I've had the opportunity to hear members from all parties speak to the calendar motion. There have been references from members of the government that would suggest that members of the opposition, people on this side of the House, would not support this calendar motion. I think it is important that I say to the members of the government tonight that I do intend to support it. I'm quite happy to be here for as long as it takes to present the perspective of the people of my riding. That's what I was elected to do, and I will never shy away from that great honour that I have, and indeed the responsibility that has been placed in me. In fact, I say to the members of the government, I'm prepared to come back here in January and pick up the work of the people of the province.

I think it's important to the people who would be viewing this broadcast this evening, who may have been given the impression that members of the opposition would not be in support of this motion, that I'm standing

before you this evening and I will say to you that I will support it. I take my role and my responsibility here as a representative of my constituents very seriously. Although there have been references sometimes about the irrelevance of this House, I have a very deep faith in the democratic process. I feel very strongly about the importance of speaking on behalf of the people, certainly the people who have sent me here. There are a number of issues that I believe need to be debated, and I believe the perspective of the people of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington needs to be heard.

Also, as a member of the Ontario Liberal caucus and as critic for children, there are a number of issues that I look forward to having the opportunity to address in this Legislature during our regular routine of the day. There are a number of issues that relate to children, especially at this time of year, that deserve our attention.

A couple of weeks ago, Campaign 2000 spoke to the people of Ontario and shared some very disturbing information. It was disturbing to me particularly, as the critic for children, to understand that in these extraordinarily strong economic times during the term of this government, child poverty had increased. We have a lot of work to do as elected representatives of the people. We owe our future, our children—I consider them our future—a most concerted effort to address this shameful reality. It is shameful because we are living in very strong economic times. It was just this week reported in the Legislature by the Minister of Finance that the treasury of Ontario will receive in excess of \$1.38 billion more revenue than had been anticipated, yet we have so many more children living in poverty. I say to the members of this Legislature, indeed we have a great deal of work to do.

2230

Again today, the minister responsible for children, as a photo op, announced, or should I say re-announced, the challenge fund. Many advocacy groups for children have certainly brought to my attention and, I know, to the attention of members of the government how the challenge fund will not begin to meet the very serious needs of children in Ontario. We're talking about children who live in poor families, whose families cannot afford to feed them, who must go to food banks in order to have food to eat, who must rely on school breakfast programs for their nourishment. We're talking about children who don't have homes. Families, people with children, are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.

So, ladies and gentlemen, we have, as representatives of the people of Ontario, a great deal of work to do. I suggest it will not be accomplished by December 21. I say to the members of the government who are so very anxious to present that they are here to work hard, I'm here to work hard too. I like working hard. I feel blessed that I am able to dedicate the time and energy to this role that I am. I'm prepared to come back here in January to deal with these very, very important and serious matters that relate to our children.

I can talk about a lot of issues of great importance even in my riding. Earlier this evening my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London spoke to the fact that certainly members of the Liberal caucus expected, anticipated, and presented within our communities the probability that we would debate an important piece of legislation we believe will be called the Farm Practices Act. This is legislation that people within the farming community in my riding are very interested in hearing about. They want to know the components of this piece of legislation. They look forward to the opportunity that the larger community in Ontario will have to contribute by way of committee hearings to this significant piece of legislation. It hasn't been introduced in the House yet, so there's a lot of work to do. This is a most important issue in my riding.

Of course, issues that relate to the environment continue to be a topic of concern in Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. I can't tell you how disappointed people in my riding—certainly they were very aware of my private member's bill that would require the Ministry of the Environment to notify municipalities and conservation authorities when permits to take water were applied for from their area. Conservation authorities from across Ontario, municipalities from across Ontario, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, that representative body of all municipalities in Ontario, were in support of the bill. It has been sent to the committee of the whole House. I do hope that when the occasion presents itself, when there is a request to bring that bill forward, the House will be prepared to support it, as the many people in Ontario who have contacted me and, I know, the Minister of the Environment have indicated.

Another significant issue in my riding relates to a landfill proposal. I look forward to future opportunities when I can continue to impress upon the government the importance that the community in my riding places on the promise made by Mike Harris that no community, no municipality, should be forced to accept the waste of another municipality. This is an issue that I'd like to have a good deal of debate and discussion and provide a lot of input on. It's an important issue in my riding, and I'm prepared to be here for as long as it takes to debate this.

We hear so regularly about the crisis in education. I have the opportunity to visit schools, to talk to students, to talk to teachers, to talk to parents. I do it in the grocery store; I do it after church; I do it when I go for my walks after supper. People are very worried. They are very concerned. This government, in my opinion, has a great deal to do to mend fences and to move forward. As recently as today, that arm's-length body the Education Improvement Commission has reported to the government that it needs to work with the partners in education, that it needs to work to remove the animosity in that workplace. This is not conducive to good learning, to good education, and that's what our children deserve.

My leader, Dalton McGuinty, has always been an advocate for students first; and for teachers, that they would be provided with the resources they need to do

their job well. Instead, what have they been given by the government? More pressure, more challenge, more ridicule. These are good people, qualified professionals who are frustrated because they do not have the resources—the time resources, the energy resources, the material resources—to provide for the children the kind of quality education they deserve. They are frustrated. Many of them come from a time and from an experience when their profession was valued, when they were respected within their community and not looked upon with disdain. They're weary now. Yes, there are situations in the province where they have acted, and it may unfold where they will continue to act, in very desperate ways to draw attention to the fact that when you pull resources away from an area so critical to our communities as education it comes at a price. We have a great deal of work to do to improve the climate within our schools so that our children will have the very best environment in which to learn.

I want to talk a little bit about the health care situation in Ontario. I get calls very regularly in my office; I want to say daily. There may be a day goes by that I don't, but then there are other days when I might get three or four, where individuals in my riding—I had a letter recently from a family who just recently moved to the community of Bath, who are very frustrated that they are not able to access a family doctor. There are members of that family who have somewhat chronic health conditions, and going to emergency rooms or health clinics is not the way to manage their health care. But that is the only option left to them, because there are no family doctors accepting new patients in their community.

2340

We have a serious doctor shortage in my riding and in Ontario, and we have a serious nurse shortage in my riding and in Ontario. I have met with community health nurses and they are burned out. They are concerned because their workload is such that there are not enough hours in the day for them to be able to minister to the sick in the way they've been professionally trained to do. It's very disturbing to these people, who have been trained how to look after people who are not well, when they're not provided with the resources they need, the most precious of which is their time. They need the time to minister to the sick, and they don't have it. They're on a very tight schedule. Sadly, it means that nurses who have been dedicated professionals to community health have found themselves either leaving the health role altogether or looking for more stable working conditions in a hospital setting. But the result of that is that community health is suffering badly, certainly in my riding, and I know throughout the province. We have a lot of work to do to turn that around.

We in the opposition have been working very hard to have the government understand that you need to provide more resources, and present more opportunities for training and encouragement for our young people to pursue careers in the health profession. We need to have our

young people understand why Ontario is a place where they should choose to have their career.

I was very alarmed when I read in the national media on the weekend that representatives from the state of New York have come to Ontario to recruit our teachers. I was very disturbed by that because I am aware that the climate in this province is not an inviting one. How sad it is that our taxpayers have paid to educate our fine young people, train them to be teachers who will now go off—not only teachers; the same phenomenon is happening in the nursing profession and in the medical profession. Our fine young, trained professionals are leaving us in droves to go to communities where they are valued, where they're given signing bonuses, where they're given wonderful opportunity for advancement. What can some of these professionals hope for in Ontario? In many communities the best they can hope for is part-time employment with full-time hours and no benefits. So we have a lot of work to do to improve conditions so that our well-trained young people, our well-trained professionals, will want to stay home in Ontario.

There was reference made earlier this evening to organized labour and the many pieces of legislation that have impacted that segment of our society in Ontario. I've met with labour representatives from my riding, these hard-working men and women, these people who live in our communities. They build our communities. They coach our kids at hockey. They are on the ball field. We see them at church. This is another group that feels very disenfranchised by this government. They feel that the work they have collectively done over the years, what they have been able to collectively achieve for the people in their profession, is being slowly but most definitely eroded by the legislation that is passed in this Legislature.

I hope I've provided some sense that we do have a lot of things to talk about. I want to stay here, I suspect for very different reasons than the members of the government. But make no mistake: I want to be here. I want to do my job. I want to represent the people of my riding and what they call me about and what they talk to me about. I want to present the Liberal perspective to the people of Ontario.

It was suggested earlier that we on this side of the House don't want to work together. Nothing could be further from the truth. We believe that we have so very regularly presented the government with valid options for consideration. We've presented amendments at committee that have been totally ignored. So I would suggest it has not been that we don't want to work with you. Our experience to date has been that you don't want to listen.

I conclude my remarks this evening and I very clearly state that I will vote in favour of this motion.

Mr Chudleigh: I'm pleased to enter the debate on such a special evening.

Applause.

Mr Chudleigh: Thank you very much. I'm also very pleased that so many of my caucus colleagues could join me at this very late evening. It's a very special evening,

because of course the Toronto Maple Leafs won with a 3-0 shutout, although that was some time ago now.

Mr O'Toole: How's RIM doing?

Mr Chudleigh: No, they beat Detroit actually.

Mr O'Toole: How's Nortel doing?

Mr Chudleigh: I haven't checked the stock market today, so I don't know how RIM or Nortel are doing. It's been such a busy day that we just don't have time to do those kinds of things. I didn't have time to watch the hockey game either, but I understand it was an excellent game, Curtis Joseph performing extremely well on the net and performing at such a level as to obtain a shutout. It is a special evening when so many of us are here at this late hour and Toronto has had victory under their belt.

This particular motion that we're debating is an important one. This government has done a great deal over this past year, and as the year 2000 draws to a close this government has much more to do.

Perhaps one of the more exciting things we've accomplished this year that is just passing started in March 1999 when the Premier announced Ontario's Living Legacy. It was that announcement that brought on the largest expansion of parks and protected areas that this province has ever seen. In fact, the addition of those parks and protected areas that this government brought in brought the total of protected acres in Ontario to a greater acreage than all the other governments in Ontario's history combined. It was a huge expansion. We now have almost 20 million acres of land protected in Ontario. To put that in perspective, if you took all the agricultural land in Ontario, that is, all the land that is under pasture, all the land that grows corn, soybeans and other crops in Ontario, and you doubled that number of acres, that would come close—it wouldn't exceed but it would come close—to the total number of acres we now have protected in Ontario. In fact, out of every hundred acres that exist in Ontario, 10 are protected for the future of Ontarians.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Say that again, because I think some people missed it.

Mr Chudleigh: Out of every hundred acres in Ontario, 10 of those acres are protected for posterity so that people who come to Ontario in the future—our children, our grandchildren, their grandchildren, 20 generations into the future—will have that land protected. That is a tremendous legacy for any government to leave to the people of Ontario, and I'm very pleased to have played a small part in protecting that land.

With the announcement of the Ontario Living Legacy, the Premier announced that there would also be nine signature sites. A signature site was a special piece of land, a piece of land that was unique in Ontario geography, something that was especially beautiful, especially unique. One of those nine signature sites was the Great Lakes heritage coastline. I've been fortunate to have had the opportunity to travel the Great Lakes heritage coastline and talk to the people in those communities. The coastline runs basically from Port Severn on the eastern shores of Georgian Bay up that shoreline to Killarney,

across the north shore of Lake Huron. It includes the island of Manitoulin and the island of St Joseph as well. It runs along the north shore of St Marys River, including the islands in the river, and then it sweeps across the north shore of Lake Superior to the Minnesota border on the international border of Pigeon River. It is 2,900 kilometres long and represents some of the most beautiful real estate people can find anywhere in the world. It is a very unique concept.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): In the interest of decorum in this place, it would be helpful if the group having a good time on the government side would keep it down and listen to the member for Halton, who has some important things to put on the record.

2350

Mr Chudleigh: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I know I'm speaking about the land that centres around your riding. Having travelled that land this summer and last winter, I can tell you what a beautiful riding you come from. You will forgive me if I suggest that Halton would perhaps be the first beautiful riding in Ontario, but certainly yours would run right up alongside it.

We started out with this Great Lakes heritage coast project in a consultative process with the people along that coast, to go out and ask them what they wanted to see, how they wanted to see their coast developed over time. We went out and asked them for that imagination, to challenge them to think about what it would look like in a generation, what it would look like in five generations.

After that first trip, we went back last March, April and May and we met with people in workshops. In the course of those workshops we worked on what their vision was, and that challenged them to imagine what their vision would be for the future. They gave us some very specific answers. We put those answers in a draft report, in a draft document. We then back to the people on the coast and asked them, "Is this what you were telling us?" The consultative process was that we had written down what they first told us and then we went back to them to check, "Is this what you meant when you were talking about your vision?"

The vision of the people who live and work along this marvellous expanse of Ontario's Great Lakes heritage coast: they talked about the feelings they had when they were on the water and looking inland. They talked about the views they had, the visions they had when they were on the land looking out to the water. They talked about the tranquillity. They talked about how they refreshed their souls when they were involved and immersed in this beautiful land. They talked about the beauty of the wild-life they see both on land and in the water. They talked about the beauty and the feelings they had.

We met with people along the coast, such as Pierre Berton. He says, "It's an area of tremendous beauty and potential and we must guard its beauty and the environment and build on its potential." That's a quote from Pierre Berton.

The other thing we heard was a great concern. Over the past five, 10, 20 years growth has come to the area. There have been new industries. There has been growth in houses. There has been population growth. There's growth in tourism up there. It's been small and modest in some areas; it's been more significant in other areas. Concern was expressed among the people who live and work there that this growth was taking away something of the uniqueness of that area. They were concerned that this growth might destroy what they now have along that Great Lakes heritage coastline. One of the things that came out of the discussions was that growth will come, but it is how that growth will come that is important.

That was how we communicated with those people and consulted with them over the course of the year. It was a marvellous experience and I appreciate that opportunity.

Given the additional time we've given to this motion, I wonder if it would now be appropriate to call the question.

The Acting Speaker: I'm not prepared to accept that at this point. Further debate?

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm obviously not going to say much of what I was going to say. Since I've got two minutes, I'll go right to my favourite topic and talk about a government that wants to get legislation passed, presumably to move this province forward, that has basically lost the trust of the people in my riding and I suspect in major portions of Ontario. Let me talk specifically about amalgamation because that's a great example.

We've had three experiences with amalgamation that I could share quickly in my next minute and a half. This government took three hospitals that were all operating in the black, none of which had a deficit, with three different cultures, and decided a couple of years ago that they would bash them all together. Then all hell broke loose and we had a \$44,000 deficit because of the shortfall in funding. You ended up restoring the funding and we were all supposed to stand up and cheer. That was one.

The other was the school board amalgamation. In the old Wentworth county school board, we were educating elementary and high school students for \$1,037 and \$1,108 less per student. We had no debt. We didn't come to the province for any money to build schools. At the time of amalgamation we were operating at a surplus. Now we've got community pitted against community around school closings. We have a business education tax that's 44% less competitive than our neighbours, which is driving a lot of the desire to amalgamate in the Halton area.

I guess these forced marriages are difficult at the best of times. Take the Canadian Alliance and the Tories, for example. I suppose that we on the Liberal side will live to fight another day. But even with a marriage that looks like it could potentially come off, you can't get that together. To take municipalities with different cultures and histories and visions of the land, with different hopes and dreams, and just bash them together, particularly

after promising you wouldn't do that, engenders the kind of distrust that Maslow talks about.

I don't know if you know about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but there are about eight of them. The first one starts—I'll end with this—with trust versus mistrust, when a little child decides whether or not they're going

to hold the parent's hand. I suspect in this House that's the stage of moral development we're at.

The Acting Speaker: It being 12 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning, Thursday, December 7.

The House adjourned at 2359.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

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Jeudi 7 décembre 2000



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 décembre 2000

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I move that in the opinion of this House, the Ministry of Health should undertake to do the following:

—Review the schedule of payment for PSA testing in Ontario to determine whether providing payment for PSA testing by the provincial health plan for men without symptoms may increase detection of prostate cancer in asymptomatic men and, if so, provide such payment;

—Create a prostate cancer awareness program and provide the money required for such purpose;

—Work with the Canada Post stamp advisory committee to facilitate the development and issuance of a commemorative stamp to raise research funds to support the fight against women's breast cancer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Tascona has moved ballot item number 53. The member has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Tascona: The first part of my presentation on this matter will deal with PSA testing and the second part will deal with the commemorative stamp for women's breast cancer.

First of all, what is a PSA test? It is a blood test that measures a substance produced by the prostate gland called prostrate specific antigen. The PSA blood test tells doctors when patients have a higher-than-normal level of PSA. A high level of PSA usually means that the patient has a prostate problem but it does not necessarily mean he has cancer. Men who have a prostate infection or prostate growth that is not cancerous may also have high levels of PSA.

Studies have shown that prostate cancer is the second most frequent cause of cancer-related death among men and early diagnosis is essential. The bottom line is that the PSA test is one of the most significant biochemical tests for the early detection of cancer.

Currently the ministry pays for the following: when a man has been diagnosed with prostate cancer and is receiving treatment or is being followed up after treatment for the disease, the PSA test is available at no charge to the patient through the hospital laboratory service. Secondly, when a doctor suspects prostate cancer

because of a man's history and the results of his physical examination, including digital rectal examination, PSA testing is available at no charge to the patient through the hospital laboratory service.

In men without symptoms, the PSA test is not paid for by the provincial health plan. A man can have his PSA test if he is willing to pay for the test himself. However, it is hoped he will make the decision only after discussion with his doctor.

The ministry has stated, in a letter to one of my constituents: "The laboratories branch of the ministry has committed to reviewing the comments the ministry has received over the last year regarding the impact of the policy on PSA. We will also consider any new clinical evidence that has been published. In evaluating the clinical evidence, we will again rely on the opinions of experts."

The resolution I have put forth today has been reviewed by the Prostate Cancer Research Foundation, and they are supportive of there being a reduction in the barrier to the increased use of PSA tests and are also in favour of prostate cancer awareness with respect to bringing this issue forward.

In terms of the studies, there are a number of them. The one I want to refer to is entitled *To Be Screened or Not To Be Screened: PSA Testing for Prostate Cancer*. It's very interesting. It says:

"In recent years the incidence of prostate cancer diagnosis has been increasing in Canadian men. On the other hand, the mortality rate from prostate cancer has remained relatively stable. This increasing gap between incidence and mortality suggests either that the treatment is more effective or that earlier detection is taking place, with men living with a diagnosis of prostate cancer for a longer time."

What that indicates, not only here in Canada but also in studies in the United States, is that there is a clear downward trend in prostate cancer mortality in Canada and in the United States.

"This downward trend in mortality coincided with an increase in PSA screening. Although these data may reflect earlier diagnosis and treatment of advanced disease, as well as more definitive treatment of localized disease, the figures are compelling."

"Before we adopt a universal screening program for the early detection of the disease it is important that an effective treatment be available to those diagnosed. Although some studies report prolonged progression-free survival following radical prostatectomy and suggest that

this is a result of earlier treatment and more organ-confined disease, others suggest that the benefits of prostatectomy have been overestimated. Until we can determine if the prolonged survival is a result of earlier detection and treatment or the fact that less malignant tumours are being identified by screening, we cannot argue against prudence in prescribing PSA testing for all men between 50 and 70 years of age. PSA screening every five years does not seem adequate, however. I agree that yearly testing is reasonable unless the serum PSA level is below 1.0 ng/mL, in which case testing every two years would be acceptable."

What we're looking for is a balance here in terms of the bar with respect to this type of testing.

1010

My constituent from my riding, whose name is John Batstone, shared this information with me. Certainly the figures are out there with respect to PSA testing. He says:

"I realize that a study to prove that the mortality rate of men will improve with widespread screening for prostate cancer has not been conducted. I suggest to you the study will never happen as it will be difficult to find a group of men who will be willing to forgo a PSA test that will find cancer in at least 3% of the group. I think 3% of Ontario men is a significant number, and to suggest funding for widespread screening is not warranted based on that percentage is to legislate without conscience."

The information we have with respect to prostate cancer and the fact that there should be more awareness made of it with respect to men speaks to two things: (1) early detection can decrease the mortality rate, and (2) a focus with respect to dealing with the PSA test in terms of whether it should be a test for one year or two years or you designate a particular age group. That issue has to be reviewed and it has to be given the attention it deserves.

What I'd like to do in the last couple of minutes of my opening statement is deal with the breast cancer stamp. I've received support from Cancer Care Ontario with respect to this initiative. I've also received support from Premiers and ministers of health across the provinces and territories with respect to this initiative. It's designed to raise funds to support research for breast cancer. This is done in the United States through a semi-annual stamp.

I have a letter from the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation which supports this initiative. They comment about the United States stamp:

"We know that this stamp was extremely successful in the United States, raising over \$15 million in two years, and we are certain that we can also have very successful results in Canada. The proceeds from the stamps will be used by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation for breast cancer research, education, diagnosis and treatment. This will bring us one step closer to eradicating this disease."

The major challenge is to get the Canada Post stamp advisory committee, which is located in Ottawa, to allow this to happen. They have only allowed a stamp of this nature to be used to raise funds on one occasion, and that was with respect to literacy. I would say that there's

compelling evidence and there is obviously tremendous support with respect to a breast cancer stamp. I'll just read from this article:

"According to the American Cancer Society, breast cancer is the leading cause of death for women between the ages of 35 and 54. This year 173,000 women will be diagnosed with the disease and 43,000 will die from it.

"The breast cancer stamp features a woman with the phrase 'Fund the fight; find a cure.'"

I have written to the Canada Post stamp advisory committee. They have indicated they will look at this, but I think we need to make sure that we have the support of this Legislature, that we have support throughout this country and also from organizations such as Cancer Care Ontario and the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation to emphasize to the Canada Post stamp advisory committee that this needs to be done. To me, to have issued one stamp to deal with raising funds for literacy has set a standard that this can be done also.

That's my resolution. I look for support from the House on these two matters for PSA testing and breast cancer.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I'm very pleased to join the debate. I will say at the outset that I certainly intend to support the member's resolution, and I hope all members of the House will. In some ways, it probably doesn't go far enough. I think the Ministry of Health and the minister have been slow to recognize that this is something that should be under the OHIP formulary. There is no question that this has some real impact on people that is substantial. I want to make it clear that I think we should be moving forward with this.

The issue of prostate cancer is one of extraordinary concern. According to the Canadian cancer statistics for the year 2000, there are more cases of prostate cancer diagnosed among Canadian men than any other form of cancer.

I think it's important to say that prostate cancer doesn't just affect men. It impacts on entire families, because it is the fathers, the sons, the husbands, the brothers, the uncles, the grandfathers, the cousins or the friends who are affected, and the reverberating effects are obviously experienced by all.

The fear of prostate cancer also impacts on individuals. Sometimes men are unable to have entitlement to the peace of mind that can accompany a screening test that has been negative simply because they cannot afford the luxury of having a test that has to be paid for out of their own pockets. There is genuine concern among many people due to the fact that the cost of the PSA test, which of course is the prostatic specific antigen test, that's done at a clinic or a doctor's office, even in cases where cancer is definitely suspected, is not covered by OHIP. I cannot help but wonder why such an important testing procedure is not properly funded through OHIP rather than shuffling off to a hospital laboratory those men whose physical exam and history point in a substantial way to cancer being a distinct possibility. Those costs are covered by OHIP.

This year, huge amounts of money are being poured by this government into supplying free flu vaccine to anybody who wants it. There is absolutely no fee schedule. Whether you're high risk, low risk, no risk, no matter, the flu shot is there for the taking, and that's a good thing. But add to this the very substantial dollars that have been poured into the expensive advertising, including television promotions, to encourage individuals to take advantage of this free vaccine, and you see what the ministry is able to commit to.

In contrast, examine the selective criteria related to the schedule of payment for PSA testing in Ontario. I will just read it quickly, if I may. This is the schedule of payment for PSA testing:

"When a man has been diagnosed with prostate cancer and is receiving treatment, or is being followed after treatment for the disease, the PSA test is available at no charge to the patient through the hospital laboratory service.

"When a doctor suspects prostate cancer because of a man's history and the results of his physical examination ... PSA testing is available at no charge to the patient through the hospital laboratory service.

"In men without symptoms ... PSA testing is not paid for by the provincial health plan. A man can have the PSA test if he is willing to pay for the test himself. However, it is hoped he will make this decision only after discussion with his doctor."

This has to change. The minister has stated publicly that the ministry will review its position on broad public screening for PSA if there is clinical evidence to support the statement that screening improves the outcome of patients. I think we've moved beyond that point. The minister's colleague Mr Tascona is asking that there be a review of the schedule of payment for PSA testing in Ontario to determine whether providing payment for testing by the provincial health plan for men without symptoms may increase detection of prostate cancer in asymptomatic men. If so, they should provide such payment.

I've spoken with many of my constituents over the past several years who are very apprehensive about the possibility of prostate cancer and who would very much like to have the screening test but who simply cannot afford the test, particularly on a repeated basis. Prostate cancer is known to be a disease of aging, and this is the time of life when most people are on reduced incomes and where every penny counts. Often these are men whose wives very sensibly practise preventive health measures of their own and who make sure, for example, that they have their regular Pap smears, breast examinations and mammograms, all of course paid for in full by our provincial health system, as it very much should be. We're very pleased that's the case. They keep hearing that early detection is of paramount importance. How long do we have to wait for government-appointed experts to tell us this is also the case with prostate cancer?

Certainly there is an added cost to this, but I ask you, Speaker, and ask everyone in the House, what price do

we put on a situation that can possibly prevent a death? Having lost my own father to cancer about a year and a half ago, I understand first-hand how painful it is to watch a loved one suffer and ultimately lose that person's treasured presence. I want to support positive measures for early detection and for prevention of advanced disease. I care for my constituents, and I worry about the things which worry them. On their behalf, I want to fight for what is fair. I believe that my colleague's resolution is fair, and therefore I offer my support for it and I ask all members of the House to support it as well.

1020

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to say at the outset that I, along with other members of our NDP caucus, will be supporting this resolution. I think we also recognize that there's not much chance that this in the end is going to lead to PSA testing being done on an annual basis and being paid for by the Ministry of Health, for a number of reasons which I want to outline.

We know the Canadian Cancer Society is not as supportive of this endeavour of annual testing for PSA as some would believe. The Canadian Cancer Society still believes there's some work to be done in order to determine if actually doing a PSA test on every individual is in the end going to give us the results we want when it comes to detecting the possibility of somebody contracting prostate cancer. Mr Tascona can speak to that a little bit later.

I know and I understand quite well, knowing how this government operates and how other governments have operated in the past, that this resolution will be passed this morning. But the way the resolution is written, it basically gives the government the kind of wiggle room it needs to be able not to do anything, but to give the opportunity to the member to say, "Look at this. I've got a resolution. It passed. I was able to do this wonderful thing in the Legislature this particular morning, December 7, 2000."

If you look at the resolution and you read it carefully, it says, "[To] review the schedule of payment for PSA testing in Ontario to determine whether providing payment for PSA testing by the provincial health plan for men without symptoms," etc. The point is "review." All that's going to happen is that the ministry is basically going to utilize the work that the Canadian Cancer Society is doing and is going to say, "Until the Canadian Cancer Society is finished its work, we don't believe that paying for PSA tests on every man in the province of Ontario within certain criteria is warranted." It is not going to happen. This is just an opportunity to say, "Look at something wonderful we are doing in health care."

I would suggest to the member across the way that what we could do, and it is something that is proven, something that is supported by the Canadian Cancer Society, is around the whole issue of colorectal cancer. You would know that Cancer Care Ontario and the Canadian Cancer Society have both come back and said that if we were to do tests on men over age 50 every year, and all we were to do is, I think, take a stool sample and

check for blood, that is the most effective way of being able to curtail the amount of death caused by colorectal cancer. In fact, in studies where that's been done—and according to the research notes I have, there have been 22 studies done in North America—all 22 studies have said in conclusion that if we were to check for colorectal cancer, we would be able to eliminate up to 80% of those deaths from colorectal cancer.

I raise this in this debate for the following reason. The government of Ontario, the Mike Harris government, agreed with that position about two years ago if I remember correctly. At that time, the Minister of Health got up and said: "We believe that what we are being told is true. We want to be able to provide for an annual test for colorectal cancer across the province for men over age 50. We know, according to the studies," said the government of the day, Mike Harris, a couple of years ago, "that if we were to do this, we could save up to 80% of those people who contract colorectal cancer."

Unfortunately, like most health announcements made by this government, nothing came of it. There was a photo op. The minister got up in front of the cameras. They had their drop designed in the back in order to give the specific message they wanted to give going into the last election. They made the announcement that they were going to do this, and nothing happened. We are two years later and there is no annual testing done for colorectal cancer.

When the government was brought to task after the election, raised by our NDP health critic, Frances Lankin, the minister said, "Oh, well, hang on a second. We are not going to do full annual tests for everybody. We are going to do a pilot program in order to determine if doing screening for colorectal cancer will actually give us the results we are looking for, because we have to make sure whatever we do is done in such a way that we know we are going to get a good result for the dollars being spent." That was over a year and a half ago. The pilot project that now the minister has retreated to, where she has said they are not going to do full annual testing for colorectal cancer for men and women over age 50, but instead are going to do a pilot project, hasn't even started yet.

I say to the member across the way, and I know the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford brings this to us in sincerity, the reality is that your motion is going to pass this morning, and the Minister of Health is going to basically sit on this and do nothing with it because she is not convinced, even in cases where colorectal cancer testing has proven to determine who is going to get cancer and curb the number of people dying from cancer; 22 studies that have been done all point in the same direction, that up to 80% of those tested will have their lives saved because of the colorectal test. They have not moved on that particular issue. What makes you believe that the government is going to move on PSA testing when the Canadian Cancer Society is at this point saying, "We think the book hasn't been written on this"? They don't believe at this point that testing across the province every man over the age of 40 or 50 is going to be the way

to go. I don't know. I'm not a doctor. I'm not a scientist. I'm not going to pretend it is or isn't.

We'll support your resolution because we think it's a step in the right direction, but I want to ask the member simply this: what makes you believe, Mr Tascona, that at the end of the day the government is actually going to follow through on this resolution? And are you prepared to give us some sort of guarantee that within a period of time—let's say we'll give you 12 months—we are going to get a definite answer on your resolution? I don't think so. I don't think you're going to be able to commit to that. You know yourself, when it comes to other issues of annual testing such as colorectal cancer, that it is your government that has not taken action on that particular issue. That's much the same as we've seen with most issues dealing with health care with this provincial government.

When they were elected in 1995, the Harris government embarked on an aggressive agenda in order to wrestle money out of the health care system. They set up the hospital restructuring commission, which took a look at which hospitals they could close across Ontario. We're seeing the effects of those decisions now by way of people who are not able to get into emergency rooms across Toronto and across all of this province. In fact, people living in Kapuskasing were not able to use the emergency department for what it is intended on two nights in the month of November because we didn't have doctors to give us coverage in those emergency departments.

One of the reasons we find ourselves in this position is because the government has systematically taken money out of health care in order to offset what they were giving to people by way of the tax cut, and it is only lately that they've started to put some money back because they threw the entire system into chaos and the system is starting to break down to an extent. Yes, the Ontario health care system is still a good public health care system that works fairly well for individuals. There are all kinds of good examples where people who need treatment for bypass surgery or whatever it is get excellent care in our hospitals. But there are signs that the system is starting to fray. It started to fray directly, member from Barrie, because your government made cuts in the health care system that threw the system into a bit of a spasm, as we might say. Now your government is starting to invest some of that money back in. Welcome back. We don't know where you've been for the last six years but we're happy that you've finally come back to your senses. But you created the problems in the system that we're now having to experience today.

I don't think for a second that by passing this motion we are in the end going to see Ontario come any closer to annual PSA tests being done for men over the age of 40 or 50. I don't think that's going to happen because clearly your government has not demonstrated, in my opinion and in the opinion of many others, that it is really committed to the issue of public health care and developing a public health care system into the new millennium. In

fact, I think you've been trying to take us down the other way.

I believe that part of what this whole agenda about taking money out of the health care system was about was an attempt to put the system into chaos so they could make the argument to start privatizing the system. I really believe that's what the agenda is of the Harris government. What they have found is that the public's appetite for private health care is not as strong as the government thought it would be or would like it to be, so they're trying to put some of the money back in that they've taken out. You can't have a system of health care operate the way it does now, where you take money out and you put entire communities at risk.

1030

I say, on behalf of the people of Kapuskasing, that your government on coming to power in 1995 promised it was going to respond to the critical doctor shortages we have in northern Ontario, that you were going to build on the successes of previous governments—the NDP government and the Liberal government before that—with programs designed to attract doctors to northern Ontario. Our approach in the NDP was to train doctors in northern Ontario so they established themselves there. You said you were going to find a solution and here we are, five years later, no closer to having more doctors in northern Ontario than we were five years ago.

Now we're finding situations such as we found in Kapuskasing this last month, where the doctors are worked off their feet. They're underpersoned as far as the doctors' complement in the community of Kapuskasing is concerned. These people are not superhuman. They can't work 24 hour a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. They need to have some support from their provincial government to say, "We're prepared to make the investment in health care to make sure that communities like Kapuskasing, Ontario, have a full complement of doctors so that we can provide the kind of health care system the citizens in that community, as in other communities, are entitled to."

It is unacceptable to find ourselves in a situation where, for two days last month, the emergency ward at Sensenbrenner Hospital had to close from 8 o'clock at night to 8 o'clock in the morning because there weren't doctors to cover the emergency ward. What we have instead are people coming into emergency, being treated by nurses, who try real hard, but if there's anything serious we don't have the expertise of a doctor to cover off the emergency that walks through the door. That I put squarely in the lap of the provincial government. I say to the Minister of Health and to the Premier, let us hope and pray that nobody comes to their death because they've not been able to get a doctor in an emergency ward somewhere in Ontario, like Kapuskasing, over the next while.

We've been raising this issue with you directly and we're asking for your help. We're saying there are two things you can do. The first thing you can do is provide the kind of funding that's necessary to bring doctors in

on locums. Yes, there are already existing programs there and, yes, that is partially successful, but we need to try to do something to attract those doctors in other communities who might be able to come in on a locum to give doctors like we have in Kapuskasing the respite they need.

That deals with the immediate solution, but the long-term solution is that we need to establish a northern medical training centre somewhere in northern Ontario. One thing we've learned in the north is that if people go off to study to become doctors, that means they're making a seven- to 10-year commitment of studying somewhere in southern Ontario. If that person is studying in Toronto or London or wherever to become a doctor, they establish roots in the community where they've gone to university. They meet somebody, they do their internship and their residency in a hospital somewhere in southern Ontario, they develop a network of friends and they develop an attraction to a community. I understand that. At the end of the day, they decide to establish their practice close to where they made that group of friends. It's hard for them to then pick up and take off and go to practise in a community like Moosonee or Kapuskasing or Pickle Lake or wherever it might be.

I would argue that what we need to do, especially in the north, is to establish at one of our universities that currently exist—Lakehead, Laurentian or Nipissing—a program where we're able to train our own doctors in northern Ontario facilities, universities and hospitals, so that those young people in northern Ontario who decide—or people in southern Ontario—to become doctors and go to university in northern Ontario have an opportunity to train in the north, establish roots in those communities, do their internship and residency work directly in places like Manitoulin Island, Sudbury, Timmins, Kapuskasing, Pickle Lake, Nipigon or wherever it might be. There's more of a chance that once those young people graduate, they are going to stay in those communities and decide to make their lives in those communities.

We have learned one thing through this process. The Liberal government tried by way of attraction programs to drag doctors to northern Ontario. It was a good idea at the time, but we've learned that as much as you try to entice people to a community, you can't force people to live somewhere if they don't want to live there. We found the most attractive program is to train those doctors in the north. That's something the NDP started when we did the northern residency program. We found the retention is that about 80% of those people who do their internship in northern communities end up staying there. We're saying, let's expand on that success and let's create a medical facility in northern Ontario that trains doctors so that in a day not too far down the road we don't have to shut Sensenbrenner Hospital because we didn't happen to have a doctor.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I'm sure it will come as no surprise to anyone in the House that I rise to support this resolution today. One of the reasons I do that

is that I think it fits very well into the overall context of our health care reforms. Members are of course familiar with what those reforms are: the restructuring of hospitals to bring them into the form of 21st century institutions that can provide 21st century health care; the changes in home care, where there have been massive injections of new money, and a change in the system to improve the quality of care and make more care available; and perhaps most important, particularly in the context of this resolution, is our commitment to primary care reform. We have seen an important start on that in the form of the recent agreement with the Ontario Medical Association. I think that provides the basis for a partnership that is going to result in something everyone agrees should happen—primary care reform. But we get less consensus when we get to actually looking at how it might be done.

I think an important part of primary reform is going to be prevention, and this resolution speaks directly to that. That's why it fits so well into the context of our overall direction in this area.

What I like most about the proposals put forward in this resolution is, number one, it takes a look at prevention; number two, it takes a look at results-based action. When we look at paragraph 1, it speaks not only of the proposal, but of finding out whether or not this is a way of actually preventing disease. As we look at prevention, we have to look at what actually works and what actually doesn't. I think the author of this resolution has been very wise in setting out, as part of the resolution, that we have to know that something is actually going to do some good before we endorse it and do it.

Paragraph 2 speaks to what I think is going to be another important part of 21st century health care, and that is communicating what has to be done to the general population. We've heard over many years that we're now in the communications age, and that's absolutely true. If there's a way of making people's health better and they don't know about it, it's worth absolutely nothing. So I think what is spoken about in paragraph 2 is very much a part of what's going to become 21st century health care.

I offer the same comment about paragraph 3. It speaks again about communications. We, as Canadians, for historical reasons I think have been rather poor communicators, both to our own people about who we are, what we do and what we should be doing, and to others. We don't get that message out to people outside Canada either. I would encourage the member to continue the work he's doing with Canada Post. Everybody uses postage stamps, which is obvious. On the other hand, to get important messages on those stamps so that more people get the message, more people can do things that will help improve their health, is very much a 21st century health care idea and I congratulate the member for that.

The last comment I'd like to make in this general area is this: I'm quite confident that this resolution is going to pass. What I'm a little less confident about is that something is going to happen as a result of it. I'd like to offer a caution to everyone in this Legislature and to the

government, that I think it's important this thing not get filed somewhere without further action.

It's quite possible, as is sometimes done, that we agree with something and then do nothing. I understand why that's the case, because there are heavy cost pressures and priorities have to be set. But this surely is a good idea. It is not going to cost a lot to get started on it and I hope something will actually happen. I invite all members of this Legislature and all members of the government to give a serious look at actually carrying out what's proposed in this resolution. It is going to make a real change for the better in the lives of a good number of people if we actually do what's proposed here, and I invite the Legislature and the government to do it.

1040

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I am going to be speaking in favour and voting in favour of the resolution today. I'm going to deal primarily with what is in provincial jurisdiction, as I believe we very often and unwisely spend a lot of time dealing with the federal jurisdiction. I will support the stamp as well, I think that is a positive move, but that's something we can no doubt tell our federal friends they should proceed with in the federal House.

I want to deal with the test itself. I raised this issue about the PSA test in a question to the minister on December 17, 1998, among other times. I happen to believe the PSA test should be available to men who wish to have that test, at no cost—it's as simple as that, in my view—just as other tests are available for other reasons.

Obviously early detection, when you're dealing with any kind of cancer, is very positive. It increases the chances, first of all, of a person avoiding death from any particular form of cancer, or some longer-term health consequences. It's going to be important that we have this test available to men, that there not be a barrier. What happens now is that it is essentially a two-tiered situation in health care. If you can afford the test, you can get it, and you pay for the test. If you believe you can't afford it, then you're not going to get the test.

I don't think we should have a two-tiered health care system. That was one of the issues in the federal election campaign. I hope the federal election campaign solved that issue, though I suspect it did not, because those who are proponents of a two-tiered health care system continue to propose that.

I think all of us would agree that early detection is important. This test is one tool available for that purpose. All of us probably have received telephone calls and letters from people who are grateful they had the PSA test and had their cancer detected early. I remember getting a letter from a former teacher of mine who lives in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka and is a friend of Ernie Eves, as well as a friend of mine. We correspond from time to time, at Christmastime and so on. He wrote to me saying how he thought it was very important because his cancer had been detected early as a result of a PSA test.

We've heard that from people so many times. We've also heard from people who are sorry they did not have that test available in a timely fashion, because their cancer had been more advanced. We're all aware of people we've lost—good friends, colleagues, members of family—to prostate cancer and other forms of cancer, and we're saddened by this. My very good friend and former colleague in this House the Honourable Robert Welch, as we know, passed away this year as a result of prostate cancer. He made a wonderful contribution to this province.

There should be no cost to this test. I suspect this resolution has been vetted by the Ministry of Health because it doesn't call directly for this test to be provided free of charge. It asks the government to investigate this. That means it has gone through the Ministry of Health and the Minister of Health has looked at it and said, "Please don't put this in the form of resolution that compels the government to do so. It puts too much pressure on."

However, it does raise the issue again. I think it is positive to have the issue raised in this House again so that the minister can have yet another look at this matter. Reference has been made to colorectal cancer, for instance, and screening processes for colorectal cancer. It would be important to make that much more widespread. Many of us realize that many people have been afflicted with that disease and that early detection is extremely important in that case.

When we get into the treatment of these diseases, because we're looking at some costs, this will save money in the long term if people have their cancer detected early. The consequences will not be as great. It will save money. I don't think people should have to go to another country to receive timely treatment for cancer care. That's what's happening now in Ontario.

I worry about the doctor shortage in Niagara, and it's an acute crisis at this time, whether people again are going to be able, through other ways, to detect diseases at as early a stage as I would like to see them detected.

We know we have a chaotic ambulance dispatch service in the Niagara region. That's another problem for another day that we will have to deal with in this House.

As well, because we're talking about costs here, there's no question that if you're going to have a top-notch health care system which is available universally, which is not a privatized system, which is not a two-tier health care system, it requires a massive investment of government funding. I believe the people of this province want to see that investment. That's why members hear me worry aloud in this House about massive tax cuts. It's because I believe we deprive ourselves, particularly during a downturn in the economy—not so much now, but during a downturn—of needed revenue to be able to invest in the kind of essential health care matters that the member from Barrie has raised before the House today. That's certainly a worthwhile investment and I would support that kind of investment.

He talks about awareness. It's absolutely essential to have that awareness. People are fearful, but we have to

have that awareness. I believe the stamp would be a positive step as well.

I intend to vote for this resolution, though I believe the test should be free of charge at this point in time and available upon request.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to rise this morning to make a few comments on the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford's resolution. I'd like to thank the other speakers, from Thunder Bay-Superior North, Timmins-James Bay and London West, for their comments, as well as Mr Bradley's comments.

I was at a meeting just the other morning, the township of Oro-Medonte's inaugural meeting, and a gentleman came up to me from the Probus Club in Barrie. Mr Tascona had spoken to the club a few weeks ago and had brought up the fact that he was bringing forward a resolution here in the House. The gentleman asked me to make sure we do whatever we could here in the House to support this resolution. He himself had been through and is currently going through some prostate cancer treatments, and he asked me to pass on to the members of the House and to Mr Tascona that we do everything we can to keep this resolution going forward.

I'd also like to thank Mr Tascona for his support of the Cancer Care Ontario unit that we're working very hard to have come to Simcoe county, to that part of Ontario. The Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie of course is a very large and new hospital; it's almost regional in status. Mr Tascona has been working very diligently to ensure that Cancer Care does come to Barrie, and I hope that does happen over the next few years because we have a growing population in that region. I'm pleased that Mr Tascona has taken the initiative in his own riding to have that done.

1050

I think the resolution is really an investment in the citizens of our province. I look at paying the \$20, and whether the people can afford it or not. I think it should be available at no cost to men across our province, particularly as men reach the age of 50 and early detection could save or protect that person's health for the future. It's not only for health care dollars that may be spent in a terminally ill ward at some time, but it's also the fact that people can lose their salaries and lose many years of work or contribution to Ontario's economy. I think for the investment alone it's well worth it, although I would expect that our federal partners would want to cover their fair share of any of these costs as well.

The other thing that I think is very important this morning is the portion of the resolution on the Canada stamp. That's an excellent idea. I hope this resolution is successful today and we can forward this. I hope that any discussions with Canada Post's advisory committee will bring forth a positive response and we can put the fight against breast cancer in women on that stamp. I think it falls in line with other awareness we see about women's breast cancer, and that's the fact that even a lot of companies like Royal Doulton—I don't know if anybody's aware of it, but if any of you gentlemen want to buy a

Christmas gift for your wife or your mother or anything like that, the Royal Doulton Co has a doll each year from which, for every one bought, they contribute \$35 to the cancer society in support of the fight against breast cancer in women.

I was amazed, when we opened the new breast screening program in the city of Orillia, how supportive the community was. I didn't have any idea at that time that just in one year, in one of the locations, they had done over 22,000 breast screenings for women. I wasn't aware it was that high.

I consider this a resolution of protection. It's very similar to the public health money we spend, and I certainly hope all members of this House will support this resolution this morning.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I stand in support of the resolution by Mr Tascona and commend him for taking up the cause as a member on the government side. Certainly you will know, and Hansard will show, that for over three and a half years now I have read petitions into the record with regard to this particular test, asking the Minister of Health and the Harris government to ensure that it is covered. To date, I've only received letters from the Minister of Health that she won't include it. So I commend the government member for challenging the Minister of Health to do what is right. To this point in time she hasn't. Hopefully he will effect some positive change and will join the chorus of Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals in asking the government to fund this test.

I speak from very personal experience because my father died of prostate cancer, a very, very horrible death. He suffered brutally, I guess is the best word to explain it. I don't know if early detection would have caused him to live longer, but I do know that his was a cruel death. He was a good man, a man who involved himself in his community in a very positive, caring and loving way. Although we question why someone dies the way they die, what we try to do is ensure that others won't have to experience the same thing, and this is what this resolution does. If early detection saves one life, it's worth it. If this test saves one life, it's worth it.

So I commend the member and certainly I'm going to be supporting the member's resolution. I hope the minister will listen to the member and include this on her list of things to do for treatment within the realm of the Ministry of Health when it comes to cancer. I would also hope that this minister changes her mind and will start fully funding the northern health travel grant, will ensure that there isn't discrimination for cancer patients. This is all a part of it. This is a bigger picture. But I don't want to get into that today. Everyone in this House and across Ontario knows my position on this.

This is a resolution that deserves to be supported. It is a resolution that challenges the government to do something positive. It is a resolution that cares about the people in Ontario who hopefully, with this early detection, will avoid the very painful death that my father experienced.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): While I'm pleased to rise in the House this morning to participate in this debate, and I would like to compliment my colleague Joe Tascona for bringing this issues before the House, it is a difficult issue to discuss. There have been a number of articles and pieces of research done on this particular topic, as to what is the most effective and accurate way of determining whether or not cancer is beginning in the prostate for men.

The resolution that we're debating today has three parts. The first is to review the schedule of payment for the PSA testing, the second is to create a prostate cancer awareness program, and the third is dealing with the issue of a commemorative stamp to raise research funds to support the fight against women's breast cancer. Since two of three of these items deal particularly with prostate cancer, I think those are the two I would wish most to speak about this morning, even though I am a woman and breast cancer obviously is of more personal concern to me.

From my point of view—I guess this follows from the comments of my colleague across the House, and perhaps it's because of the age I'm at—it seems that I know more and more men who have been stricken with this, or at least have had a scare. Perhaps it's the demographics that we're facing, but from my own personal experience, and I certainly have received a number of letters about this matter in my constituency office, it's very clear that it is an issue that is on the minds of the male constituents in my riding. I wouldn't limit it just to the men in my riding, but obviously then on the minds of the people who love those men in our riding. There is something about a cancer that is deeply frightening to people, and particularly when you're dealing with prostate or breast cancer there are different implications that come with that which speak probably to the manliness or the womanliness of the person involved.

It is something that we need to pay attention to as a government, and whether or not the government decides to act on this issue of the testing, the very fact that this issue is being debated in the House this morning in private members' hour is a step in the right direction to raise awareness of the whole issue for men who haven't been thinking about it and who may somewhere along the line read an article or have someone mention to them that it's something they do need to pay attention to and something that they need to understand for their betterment and for the issue of preventing problems and maintaining optimal health. For the most part it is an illness that, once detected, can be successfully treated, and that's true of most cancers nowadays. But obviously the incidences of cancers are growing and any steps that can be taken to prevent this are important.

For many years there has been increased awareness of breast cancer, and certainly our government and many other governments around the world have taken steps to address this. The fact that the whole issue of a stamp is out there being discussed indicates how far awareness of this illness has come. I was at an event this summer, a

walk to raise funds and to remember women who had been stricken with breast cancer who had died, and those who had survived. I was quite heartened to see how many family members were present to remember, but foremost in their minds was to raise the awareness of others in the community so that they wouldn't lose somebody and so that they would be successful in their fight. Of course, the key in all of that is early detection. Funds are needed for that.

I would simply add my voice as a woman in caucus here to say that I compliment my colleague who has brought these three initiatives forward. I think they are worthy of the consideration and support of this House. They are not always easy topics to talk about, because for many of us when it's on our minds it's a signal that we know someone or we have had a personal experience that probably has been painful to us in our personal lives. Such is certainly the case in my own life, but the outcomes have been positive.

I compliment my member and I support him in his endeavour.

1100

The Deputy Speaker: In response, the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

Mr Tascona: I want to thank the members who have spoken on this resolution: Thunder Bay-Superior North, Timmins-James Bay, London West, St Catharines, Simcoe North, Sudbury, and Guelph-Wellington. All of their comments are received with thanks.

Certainly the part of the resolution that deals with PSA testing—prostate cancer is the second most frequent cause of cancer-related death in men. That is a fact. Early detection—call it prudence—is something that universal screening can address. There may be issues, obviously, with respect to the age category where that may arise. There may be issues in terms of the frequency of testing. But I think it's important to look at this for what the intent is, to pay for that test, because prudence is something we should be promoting.

Funding of the awareness is very clearly set out in that resolution. We need to fund an awareness program with respect to this type of cancer. There are ministerial materials that go out there right now to the physician and to the patient which are basically educational in nature. I would submit that's not enough. We have to do more.

Finally, on the breast cancer stamp, certainly that is something that would be very positive in terms of raising funds for research across this country and also the other issue of awareness. I think with the support of this House and the support that I've received in letters from Premiers and Ministers of Health across the country, and working with the Breast Cancer Foundation and other cancer groups, we can put forth a strong case to the stamp advisory committee for them to make this a stamp that can raise funds to fight breast cancer.

The Deputy Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate. I will place the question regarding this motion at 12 o'clock noon.

FIREFIGHTERS' MEMORIAL DAY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE JOUR DE COMMÉMORATION DES POMPIERS

Mr Levac moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 107, An Act to proclaim Firefighters' Memorial Day / Projet de loi 107, Loi proclamant le Jour de commémoration des pompiers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Brant has 10 minutes.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to make reference to and display and read some materials received from outside the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Levac: Thank you, members.

I want to be very clear about the bill. It's a bill that I believe is non-partisan. I believe it's long overdue. For the record, I want to read the bill. The bill in itself is two pages long. The first page is the cover page. The second page, the essence of the bill, is one sentence. But the preamble is very important, so I'd like to read the bill into the record.

"An Act to proclaim Firefighters' Memorial Day

"Fire fighting is known as one of the most dangerous professions. Firefighters working on behalf of the people of this province are called upon to take extraordinary risks every day in order to protect the public from the dangers posed by fires and other life-threatening situations. Many firefighters have given their lives in the performance of their duties.

"Given the enormous commitment which the firefighters in this province have demonstrated repeatedly to the people of Ontario, it is appropriate to proclaim a memorial day to commemorate those firefighters who have fallen in the line of duty. This day will provide an opportunity for all Ontarians to honour and recognize the important contribution these people made to preserving our safety and well-being.

"Therefore, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, enacts as follows"—and this is the bill:

"1. The first Sunday in October in each year is proclaimed as Firefighters' Memorial Day.

"2. This act comes into force on the day it receives royal assent.

"3. The short title of this act is the Firefighters' Memorial Day Act, 2000."

That's the essence of the bill. It's non-intrusive but it's important: small but mighty.

I've had the opportunity to speak on several occasions in this House regarding firefighters, as is my duty and role as critic for the Solicitor General. When given that honour by Dalton McGuinty, I was taken aback by the trust that he placed in me to protect and to understand the needs of our firefighters and our police and our emergency measures act. So I'd like to share with you some of the comments I have made in the past about our firefighters in this province.

"I rise today to speak on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus to recognize the professional firefighters who join us in the Legislature today from fire stations around the province. This is a job that places one's life on the line every single day. Firefighters perform their duties, understanding the threat of personal injury, in order to keep our communities and families safe. To them and their families I say ... thank you.

"This past Sunday"—three Sundays ago—"a firefighter was injured in Sudbury responding to a home fire. Earlier this month, a lone firefighter saved two lives in Midland, even under unsafe" working conditions. "As legislators, it is our duty to assist firefighters any way we can so that they can do their job professionally and safely...."

"That is why months ago I introduced Bill 107, the Firefighters' Memorial Day Act."

Specifically, it was in June and, coincidentally, the member from Simcoe North introduced an act to honour police officers as well. Under those two particular umbrellas, this House must take action that is non-political, non-partisan and simply says that we honour these people. Today it's the firefighters.

It's important that we go beyond Bill 107, as important as it is. We have to have right-to-know legislation to protect our firefighters. Third party investigations into occupational diseases is also needed.

I appreciate the fact and the opportunity that has been given to us today to honour and protect our firefighters. As I asked and received unanimous consent, I have received over 450 pieces of correspondence from firefighters across the province, from fire services across the province, from fire chiefs across the province, supporting, asking for and commending this bill because for one day it requests us to stop and think and remember the people who have given their lives in the performance of their duties. There are people in this House who have been affected by the professionalism of firefighters. There are people in this House who have unfortunately lost family members as a result of firefighting.

In the letter I sent around to ask people if they understood and wanted to have a memorial day, I was able to raise awareness of the fact that currently there is no one day officially recognized in the Ontario Legislature to pay tribute to the outstanding contribution firefighters and those in fire services continue to make in our society day in and day out. I felt, after doing my homework on this issue, that it was long overdue. We need to officially recognize a memorial day for the firefighters.

I also have a list of over 400 individuals from all of the different ridings that were represented in this Legislature from all parties that have received these pieces of correspondence. I also reported to the House beforehand that the bill was approaching and that I sought their unanimous consent to pass the bill as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, that's not the case right now, but I continue to push and ask this House to give us that time, to give us that moment in time, in history, to allow us to do something in the Legislature that far too often

we do not do, and that is fully co-operate on the passing of this legislation in order to prove in a positive and upbeat way that our firefighters are appreciated and their sacrifice is indeed honoured.

We've received correspondence from Elora, King, Toronto, Stratford, Listowel, Lincoln, Middlesex, North Perth, the firefighters of West Perth, St Marys, Durham and of course Brantford. Three people in Brantford have lost their lives performing the tasks of firefighting over the years. I want to share for a very short moment some bravery across the province.

On June 17, 1998, Brian Young, a 12-year veteran from south Frontenac, heard a loud crash outside his home, and frantic screams. He rushed out of his home to find a truck engulfed in flames mere metres away from his front door. The 12-year-old driver was already dead. However, Young was able to save the 14-year old passenger after he managed to cut the boy's safety belt free. When asked what went through his mind when he did this act of bravery, Young said, "I never really thought about it. I just jumped in and helped the boy. That's my job."

On November 13, 1999, firefighters pulled a 40-year-old man from a burning house in Timmins. Although the house was in flames, members of the Timmins fire department entered the residence and removed the man safely.

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The list is endless. I pulled from the Web site the honour roll from the Toronto firefighters. As far back as 1848 we've had firefighters give their lives in the line of duty. From 1848 to now, we have not given ourselves an official day to recognize those who have died in a job that very few people want to do.

I'm asking for non-partisan acceptance of this bill and quick passage in any way, shape or form. I would challenge the members in this House to find a way to make sure that those people who have the authority and the power to do so would take the time to ensure that our brave firefighters are recognized in an official way across Ontario.

I'm very proud to say that I formed a group called Friends of the Firefighters in Brantford, Ontario. In Brantford, our goal was to raise enough money for one thermal imager. The community banded together and we raised enough money to buy three thermal imagers, plus accompanying equipment and training, to the tune of over \$110,000. Equally important, in the rest of the riding of Brant I was able to secure through our committee enough money to buy three more thermal imagers, which speaks to our dedication to our men and women who sacrifice their lives day in and day out. These types of activities prove nothing less than that we honour, respect and admire our firefighters in Ontario. This bill, this act of Parliament, this dedication that we can put in legislation will show one more time the importance in which we hold our firefighters in Ontario.

It's important for us to recognize that families are behind the firefighters. We need to honour and bring

dignity to those fallen lives, for the sake of the firefighters, yes, but more importantly for the living, as a testimony that we respect their families. We respect and honour them and thank them for the sacrifice they know their loved ones make day in and day out.

As I finish my time, I can only ask the members of this House to pass Bill 107 as quickly as possible, and I thank them for their indulgence.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise this morning in support of Bill 107, An Act to proclaim Firefighters' Memorial Day in Ontario.

I guess I have to agree with the member from Brant: it's one of those bills that should be non-partisan and that I believe is very similar to the bill of Mrs Mushinski, from Scarborough Centre, Bill 130, and similar to what I had discussed with Mr Levac earlier, my Bill 111, the Ontario Police Week Act. The fact that no other province has shown leadership in this regard is a chance for us in the province of Ontario to do just that.

As my notes say here, in the last 20 years, between 1979 and 1999, 25 firefighters have lost their lives in the line of duty. I'm not sure whether those numbers are full-time fire departments or include volunteer fire departments, but I did know one person one time, Mr Johnson from the township of Orillia fire department. He died in the line of duty, but he actually died of a heart attack carrying a generator to the scene of a fire. That was a very sad day in the history of that volunteer fire department.

I'd like to just say a few things about volunteer fire departments. I know a lot of the major fires we hear about are handled by full-time departments, but across Ontario we rely heavily, particularly in rural Ontario, on the volunteers who sit on and train under our municipal councils. I've had a working relationship for almost 20 years with volunteer fire departments, starting with Fire Chief Ernie Beach in 1980. It was a department that was along the lines of a social club, although they handled a number of fire calls and they did a lot of resuscitation calls as well. As time progressed, they had continually done more and more training until, when I finished my political career in municipal government in the township of Severn, we had an active volunteer fire department of 80 volunteers, and a full-time chief and deputy chief. I can't say enough about the work these people do, the hours they put into training, the hours they put into fundraising on behalf of organizations like muscular dystrophy and working on behalf of school programs. They are just good, active members of our communities.

Any time we can support a resolution like Bill 107, I think it's important we do so. It's important that we recognize those many people who have given their lives, but also that we recognize that we appreciate the work put in by our full-time and volunteer fire departments across our province. It's certainly respected. There's a lot of precautionary action taken on any fire, but the odd time someone dies in the fire and that's very unfortunate. This time it's a good opportunity for our government and the opposition to support Mr Levac's bill. I believe it will

send a good message to all our volunteers and our full-time fire departments across the province.

A number of people in this House had the opportunity last week to meet with the professional firefighters' association. They brought forth some good points. I thought they presented themselves in a very professional manner. I met with them for over an hour in my office and we discussed the issue in Midland where one fireman went into a house fire and actually saved two people. If he hadn't been there, there probably would have been two people dead today. So those types of problems come forward.

I'm pleased to listen to it. I support Bill 107 and I ask the members of this House to support it as well.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I too would like to add my congratulations to the member for Brant for bringing this forward. Many taxpayers, particularly residential property taxpayers, sometimes do not see the value they get for their tax dollars. There are certain municipal services where everyone can see the value they're getting. We're thinking of the police, of fire, of some of the other municipal services such as roads and parks and things along that line. Quite often we forget the risk these individuals take on our behalf to make sure our cities and communities and our smaller villages and hamlets are secure. Whether they're full-time firefighters or part-time firefighters, they all are doing it with one prime motivation and purpose in mind: to ensure that the people of their communities are safe and sound. To recognize all the firefighters, particularly those firefighters who have given their lives over the years for the safety of their fellow citizens, is commendable and highly overdue.

I was just given a list, and this is only a list of the Toronto firefighters who have lost their lives in fires going right back to 1848. There are well over 250 names on this four-page list of individuals who have actually died as a result of fires that have taken place. I'm sure this goes for the entire province.

I've been given another list. In researching this matter, I was able to find these statistics. Just last year, there were three firefighters who lost their lives trying to protect our communities. In Sault Ste Marie a fire occurred in April of last year and a firefighter lost his life. Also in April of last year, two firefighters escaped serious injury in Port Colborne, but they could have very easily been severely injured or killed as a result of that. In May of last year, two Cumberland firefighters used their rescue boat to in effect save two boys who were clinging to an overturned canoe from drowning.

Firefighters aren't only there to fight fires for us and to make sure our communities are safe; they also are helpful in so many other ways. If we can recognize them all, particularly the ones who have fallen in the course of duty, then I think we should do that. I would like to congratulate the member for Brant for bringing this bill forward. Let's make sure that from now on, the first Sunday in October will forever be known as Firefighters' Memorial Day in this province.

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Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to rise today with respect to the private member's bill brought forth by Mr Levac. The intention—it's An Act to proclaim Firefighters' Memorial Day—is something this province would be the leader in with respect to doing such a thing, because when you review the jurisdiction across the other provinces in terms of what they have done, it's remarkable that there is little, if any, legislation on the matter. Second, some provinces don't have a memorial or a provincial day of recognition for this group of hard-working public servants.

This province has taken a number of measures to support our firefighters. In 1997 the Ministry of the Solicitor General introduced a public safety officers' survivor scholarship fund of \$5 million to provide scholarships for spouses and children of public safety officers killed in the line of duty. The fund was established to enable the people of Ontario to partially recognize the debt of honour owed to surviving families.

Firefighters are considered public safety officers. We obviously know that because their service is so essential that they're not given the right to strike. To date, approximately \$81,000 in scholarship funding has been provided to 13 recipients, since the program was introduced. All were children of fallen officers, 11 in total, or firefighters, two in total.

There is also another initiative that's underway by Marilyn Mushinski, the member for Scarborough Centre. Her private member's bill entitled An Act to proclaim Ontario Firefighters' Week recognizes the brave men and women who unselfishly risk their lives to keep us safe from the perils of fire in our homes, workplaces and communities. Her bill would legislate a week dedicated to the contribution firefighters make to public safety and encompass a day of memorial for fighters, as per current practice.

There's no doubt that Firefighters' Memorial Day is something we all can support. The measures that have been taken by this government have gone a long way in terms of changes to how firefighting is done, not only in terms of fire trucks but in changes to the Ontario fire code; smoke alarms; Bill 84, which is the Fire Protection and Prevention Act; changes to the fire marshal's public fire safety council; and also the office of the fire marshal, who has a very important role to play in this process also.

The Solicitor General has taken a number of steps with respect to not only giving recognition to the men and women in the firefighting profession, but also providing a structure to promote not only safety within the profession but also public awareness. I think that's what the member across is trying to do here: bring about public awareness, public appreciation of the work that has been done by firefighters in their profession.

When you combine that with the private member's bill by the member for Scarborough Centre, An Act to proclaim Ontario Firefighters' Week, it certainly is recognition to honour our firefighters with respect to public

safety, so certainly I can support this. I'd be very surprised if other members in the House wouldn't support this in terms of the role that firefighters play. This is not something that is owned by one particular member. We're glad the member has brought this forth. We're all here together as equals. We're all here together to recognize a profession that has provided public safety, and there should be no ownership in this particular piece of legislation, because there isn't any. It's all something that we equally share.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): It truly is a privilege to stand and support Bill 107, put forward by the member for Brant. I congratulate Mr Levac on taking the initiative and the lead to get this going.

I, quite frankly, am in awe of our firefighters, whether they be full-time or volunteer. We have all too often in this particular era lost the meaning of "hero." Many of our young people, if asked for a hero, will name a movie star or a music artist when I would suggest that each and every firefighter in the province is a hero. They show incredible bravery that has not been recognized enough by our population, so what a wonderful opportunity this provides to set aside a little time each year to recognize their contribution.

There is a verse in the Bible that I may not quote exactly but it is to the effect that "No greater love hath a man than this, that he lay down his life for a friend." Our firefighters, each and every day, leave home knowing that there may be a requirement for them to lay down their life for us. That absolutely overwhelms me. The emotions are too great to actually describe that there are people who are prepared to do this. I think it is fair to say that for those in the firefighting profession it's not a job—it's a calling. It's a mission on their part, and I've spoken to many who have told me that as far back as they can remember they wanted to be a firefighter.

I can think of one individual in my riding, Tom Nobles, who is suffering the effects of poor health due to attending at a fire with unknown chemicals in it. Without thinking, without any hesitation whatsoever, Mr Nobles entered the building to ensure that no one in there was at risk and to put the fire out. He is paying, and his family is paying, a price for that. We need to recognize and appreciate. There are many Tom Nobles all over this province who are suffering ill health because of their commitment and their dedication to us.

We also need to recognize the commitment of family members of firefighters who know that each time their loved one leaves the home, absolutely nothing may happen that day or there may be a major event requiring them to lay their life on the line.

So the least we can do is set aside a little time each year not only to remember those who have paid the supreme sacrifice in protecting us but to also recognize and respect and honour those who each and every day perform the service that ensures us and our loved ones are safe.

This is such an overdue bill that I'm stumbling a little bit on what we need to say to these people. This is just a

wonderful way to recognize their contribution. I hope everyone ensures speedy passage of this bill.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Look, part of me bristles a little bit. Were it not for my regard for the author of this bill, and my understanding of his intent, were this to come from anybody other than an opposition member, I'd be far more critical of the bill. Of course I'm going to vote for the bill. If there's anybody here that doesn't vote for the bill, they're not being good Canadians, they're being disrespectful to firefighters. But good grief, firefighters were here on November 28, 29 and 30 for a very specific reason. They weren't here to lobby for Ms Mushinski's feel-good, "Let's scratch them behind the ears and send them home" legislation. As a matter of fact, that was an insult and I was ashamed. Firefighters were in the members' galleries and the public galleries, and in an incredibly cynical and opportunistic move—oh, and are cynicism and opportunism the unique prerogative or in the unique ownership of Conservatives? Of course not. I guess part of politics is seizing the moment, being there at the right time in the right place with the right comments. Because Lord knows if you're not there in the right time and the right place, or if you're there with the wrong comments, then all hell breaks loose. You know that.

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So of course I'm going to support the bill, and other New Democrats are going to support the bill, just like we supported Ms Mushinski's bill. As I say, I have regard for the author of this bill and for his intent and his motives in putting it forward.

But it's oh so easy to erect a monument to police officers, as they deserve, but then to deny the fact that we have fewer cops per capita now than we did in 1994, when the province was still reeling from a deep recession, when revenues had crashed through the basement. It's also fine, similarly, to proclaim a day for recognition of firefighters—a week, a month, a fortnight. But then to turn our heads to firefighters when they come to this Legislature with some real concerns about staffing, about the power of the fire marshal's office, about the abuse of the managerial exclusions, a power that was created in Bill 84—an abuse that this government was forewarned of; it was the subject matter of a whole lot of criticism during the Bill 84 hearings. The role of the fire marshal and whether or not he or she, that office, will have the real power with adequate staff to perform audits of local firefighting services and make sure those audits have some impact on how those municipalities provide for staffing of those firefighting services was very much at the forefront of debate during the Bill 84 hearings.

Let's not ignore the concern that firefighters had and continue to have about the stupid squeegee bill, which prevented firefighters, along with a whole lot of other good people across this province, from doing the fundraising they do and have done historically, that amounts to millions and millions of dollars a year, fundraising that's incredibly creative, fundraising that involves all of the community, but fundraising that relies most signifi-

cantly on the incredible commitment and the contribution of volunteer time by firefighters. I'm talking about the boot drives. Maybe folks in Toronto—I don't know if Toronto gets a chance to experience those the way we do in small-town Ontario. I was out with the firefighters in Welland when they had their boot drive, and what they do is they take their helmets and boots. It's a very creative form of fundraising—not for themselves; for muscular dystrophy, among other things.

I was proud to stand with them. I praise and credit the Niagara Regional Police for exercising their good judgment at not laying any charges, but I also understand that had there been, for instance, a single complaint from what I call a cranky citizen, the Niagara Regional Police probably would have had no choice but to lay a charge. I also understand that in other communities firefighters weren't as assured as they were in Welland and Niagara that there would be no charges actively pursued, to the point where—again, I'm not faulting those police departments. The job of those cops is to enforce the law. There's the law; they didn't write it. They may, and I suspect they do, agree that it's among the sillier laws that have been passed in this province, or imposed, but their job is to enforce it. So I'm not criticizing the cops.

So here we are, and I join in with the words of praise for firefighters. I know these women and men from down where I come from, and I know a whole lot of them from across the province. I've gotten to know them to know them, and I feel very fortunate for having gotten to know them, during the course of my involvement here at Queen's Park, and very much during the incredible battle over Bill 84, where firefighters organized one of the most effective campaigns this province has ever seen.

Although they didn't achieve all of their objectives, they made some serious impact on the most dangerous elements of Bill 84. But they also raised those concerns about Bill 84 on which I recall government members of that committee saying, "Don't worry about it." What's the line? "No problemo." Well, it is a problem. The matter of managerial exclusions has been being abused in municipality after municipality. Firefighters are saying, "Look, amend the act so that the matter of managerial exclusions can be dealt with" and can only be dealt with in a fair way, in a way that doesn't attack and impact in a negative way on the collective bargaining unit.

A modest proposal, isn't it: the issue of minimum staffing. Firefighters, like our cops, like our correctional officers, are called upon to be very much that front line of community safety personnel. We may, all of us, as taxpayers—and all of the folks across this province are taxpayers of one sort or another—say, "Why do there have to be so many firefighters on duty at that time? Heck, there wasn't a fire, there wasn't a call that day."

But when your mom or dad has the heart attack or the stroke or when your house is on fire and you've got your kids up in their bedrooms on the second floor, you want the biggest damn crew of firefighters arriving as can possibly be imagined. It's of little comfort to see firefighters in the dilemma, understaffed, on their truck

that's first to arrive on the scene, of having to break their own regulations to enter the building—and they do—having to put themselves at risk—and they do. That's how firefighters die. Or they have to perhaps—and firefighters are loath to do this—pause that extra second to try to evaluate the situation. That extra second, as we know—and if you didn't know, read the transcripts from Bill 84 and you will learn that mere seconds count oh so dramatically. Seconds—not minutes, seconds—mean the difference between life and death.

And firefighters do far more than put out fires. Firefighters, as we all know, in every community across this province, as understaffed as they are in almost every community across this province, are there at motor vehicle accidents. They're there in those traumatic injury situations. They're there in those traumatic health crises—heart attacks, strokes—with the defibrillation units, the paddles.

With the screwed-up ambulance dispatch system that this government has imposed on municipalities, it has caused at least two and maybe as many as four deaths down in Niagara region—not because our paramedics don't want to do their job and certainly not because firefighters or other emergency personnel don't want to do their job. When this government screws up the dispatch system, in the context of that, firefighters' role in attending to those health emergencies becomes that much more relevant.

This government's obsessed with giving municipalities the tool box. The tool box is a wrecking bar, a chainsaw. That's what it is. The tool box is new arbitration rules, and the government tried to jig it even more. Thank goodness for the Ontario Court of Appeal, because the government tried to jig that up even more with their appointment of judges as arbitrators. Remember that? It was the SEIU and CUPE decision. And this government's contemplating appealing that decision? I'm not sure that we shouldn't be more concerned about that waste of taxpayer's money, because this government's track record in our courts has not been particularly impressive. I'm hard-pressed to recall a case that they've won. Lord knows, don't send the Attorney General, because we heard the comments that were made about his last appearance in the Supreme Court of Canada. He certainly didn't do anybody proud, did he?

1140

Look, colleagues, friends—if I have any here. I'm not here to develop social relationships. That should be obvious to you folks by now. I'm not particularly interested in them. But listen friends and colleagues. It's one thing and it's oh so easy to stand up and say, let's declare a firefighter memorial day, week, month, fortnight, whatever. Let's cut to the chase here and commit ourselves to talking about those—of course, we should be acknowledging the incredibly important role of firefighters, who, at great risk to themselves and with great professionalism—firefighting has never been more complex and it has also never been more dangerous. The role of firefighters has never been broader in terms of the emerg-

encies they respond to reactively and the work they do proactively, because you'll note that there are fewer fires than there have been historically. That's a result of the firefighter's role in fire prevention. There are fewer deaths in this province than there were 50 years ago from fires and that's because of the firefighter's role in promoting fire safety, fire services that go door to door installing smoke alarms and detectors.

Do all these services deserve to remain unsung? Of course not. But if you really mean what you say, let's be prepared to address those issues that firefighters raised during their lobby efforts here at Queen's Park November 28, 29 and 30. Let's do more than engage in, "Let's make them feel good and tell them oh how grateful we are. Thank you very much, firefighters," and then boot them at the same time. Let's respond to those concerns. Let's have legislation amending Bill 84 dealing with managerial exclusions. Let's have amendments dealing with minimum staffing. Let's have amendments dealing with the power of the fire marshal to make meaningful audits and to make sure those audits are complied with by municipalities. Otherwise, they're irrelevant. That's what firefighters said and that's what the criticism was during the course of Bill 84.

And let's not handcuff our firefighters when they want to do community service like raising money for muscular dystrophy. Let's make sure they don't have to go out there uncovered by any municipal permit, at risk of being busted and uninsured. Let's get down to the real issues here.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I rise to speak in favour of the bill and I'd like to congratulate the member from Brant, Mr Levac, in introducing this bill. I can see he spent some time in its preparation. I think it is time that we spent a specific day honouring firefighters, and the day he has chosen is the first Sunday in October.

My riding, like many others in this place, is basically a rural community, although there are some urban parts to it. The entire riding consists of volunteer firefighters. I appreciate that the larger communities are full-time fire departments, and I'll let others speak to that, although they do basically the same work. But I would like to address my comments in support of the bill to the volunteer firefighter. I am pleased that Mr Levac has introduced the bill because I think we need to honour those people.

There are many communities in my riding that have volunteer fire departments: Dundalk, Shelburne, Grand Valley, Orangeville, Caledon—it goes on; there are quite a few of them. They all do outstanding work. They literally save us. They save our lives; they save our property; they do things that we should be forever grateful for, which I trust is the main purpose of his bill.

There was a fire just recently in Dundalk, several weeks ago, which we were quite concerned about. It was on the main street; a number of buildings were damaged. There was a seniors' facility nearby that had to be temporarily vacated. Fortunately, the fire didn't affect

them, but the work of the firefighters, from speaking to the local mayor, Don Lewis, and others in the community, was simply outstanding. There have been other fires, and I know we could all tell stories in our communities of fires that have occurred and the wonderful work that is done.

These firefighters do all kinds of things. Some of them have been alluded to by other members. They hold open houses, and the purpose of those open houses is to introduce members of the public to the volunteer firefighters, to show how some of the equipment works, to talk about home escapes—how you get out of a place that's on fire—the inspections that go on. Yes, they're becoming more rigorous, and well they should be. As one of the other members mentioned, probably the number of fires is down, but it's because of the work that's done by these fire departments around our province.

The firefighters are being required to do more and more, with the number of medical calls they do with ambulances. They have to go on training courses continually. They go away and spend time out of their own—they're leading two lives. They have their regular job, and then they have the life of a volunteer firefighter, and they take time off from work and time off from the family to go and take courses. Then they come back and educate the other firefighters and other people in the community.

I spoke to one member in my riding, Bruce Beatty, who's a volunteer firefighter in Orangeville, and he said he wanted me to mention one thing. That was the topic of green lights, which were recently introduced by this government, and that if you see a car with a green light on it, it's not mandatory, but members of the public should be aware that that is a firefighter who's going to a fire or going to the fire hall to serve maybe even your own house. He thinks the public should be made more aware of those green lights, as do I.

I've attended functions all throughout my riding honouring these people, people who have spent 25 years or more performing this wonderful service to their community. I congratulate the member for Brant. As has been said, I can't believe anyone's going to vote against this, but I congratulate him for the initiative he's taking in bringing this bill forward.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I stand in support of Bill 107 and thank the member for Brant, Mr Levac, for bringing it forward. I also stand in my place today and challenge the government, the Ministry of the Environment and the Solicitor General's department, to investigate a very serious occurrence that took place at an Inco dumpsite blaze. It started on October 27; it was put out on October 29. Some 31 firefighters were involved. The Ministry of the Environment was asked to come to the site to identify the toxins that were burning. They refused. At the beginning of November, the fire chief from Sudbury sent a letter to the Ministry of the Environment asking for the opportunity to sit down to have a debriefing so that these 31 men can understand what type of chemicals they were fighting. To date there has been no response.

I simply challenge this government, if you support this bill, support it by your actions. Make sure that the Ministry of the Environment sits down with the Sudbury professional firefighters. Make sure those 31 people who want to know what they were fighting at least have some closure to this fire. I challenge this government to not only talk the talk today, but to walk the walk.

I commend and thank the Sudbury professional firefighters for the excellent work they do. Chris Stokes, Marc Leduc, Mike Ouellette, Mike O'Reilly and Danny Stack are only some of the executive who ensure that our community is protected. I challenge this government to live up to their obligation.

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Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I will be supporting this resolution of course. I think it's most appropriate that we recognize firefighters with this particular bill, which is An Act to proclaim Firefighters' Memorial Day.

I was very pleased when we saw a move in that direction with the police officers. We had a police memorial erected where the provincial government followed the lead of the federal government of a number of years ago. I think it was 1993 that the federal government erected a police memorial and the provincial government did so last year. I was pleased with that. I was in attendance at that.

I think a memorial day for those who are involved in firefighting is very important, but there are so many other issues that we must deal with in terms of firefighters in this province. We have to remember those important issues. We know it's a very dangerous job. Anybody who has watched firefighters in action has to admire the fact that they're going into danger at all times. You simply don't know what you're dealing with when you're dealing with fire, what is inside the building you're going into or the vehicle you're going into.

They confront very difficult circumstances. In a fire or in a drowning situation or any kind of accident that happens, they are often the people who are there to help to extract people who are very badly injured or who may be deceased. It has to be very difficult for firefighters, both psychologically and physically, to do the job they do. We thank them very much for that.

But we must recognize the issues they've brought to our attention on their day—we call it lobbying here—when they came to speak to us about issues such as their voluntary action in the community. They are great fundraisers. They are really people dedicated to the community in so many different ways. The squeeze bill has had a negative effect on them, for instance, because they're unable to do what they used to be able to do with the special fundraising they had in that particular circumstance. So I want to urge the government to look at all of the issues that are important to firefighters in this province.

I intend to support this bill because I think we should pay tribute to those who have lost their lives in the defence of others and in trying to save others.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I will be supporting the bill by my colleague Mr Levac. I think it's important to recognize those who have given their lives, but it's also an opportunity to recognize those who have risked their lives.

I'll just give a brief personal experience. My wife and I and our family live an old farmhouse. It's 160 years old now, a wooden structure. I think it was 15 years ago, on Christmas Eve, the coldest Christmas that I can ever remember. We were going to go out to a friend's house for Christmas Eve dinner. My mother-in-law wasn't feeling well so my wife stayed home with her. Fortunately, we have smoke alarms in our house. The smoke alarm went off and there was a fire building very quickly in our garage. Remember, this is a wooden structure. This was about 10 o'clock on Christmas Eve. We were very fortunate. The fire truck was just backing back into the hall, having been out at a call. Fortunately, we live close to the fire hall. The call came in and the fire truck was there probably in about 30 seconds and they saved the house.

My point is this: first, while I was out enjoying Christmas Eve and warm and comfortable in a house, there were our firefighters again working Christmas Eve. They had just returned from another fire and, as I said, without a question of a doubt, they saved our house, so we still live in it, fortunately, and it's now 15 years older, and 15 years better I might say.

I wanted to particularly salute the firefighters—at the time the Scarborough firefighters, now the Toronto firefighters—and say from personal experience how much the community appreciates what they do. Nothing could perhaps be more symbolic than Christmas Eve, as the rest are enjoying the festivities, there our firefighters are on duty, standing by and protecting us. From first-hand experience, our family has benefited enormously, so I obviously will support the bill. As I said, it is an opportunity to pay tribute to those who have lost their lives, but also to recognize those who continue to risk their lives for us.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I want to congratulate the member for Brant for bringing the bill forward today in a very honest fashion, allowing us the opportunity to discuss once again what the real issues are for firefighters across Ontario.

On behalf of the constituents of Windsor West, I congratulate our own firefighters from Windsor who work diligently, not just fighting fires and saving lives, but also working in the community on a regular basis.

I marvelled when the firefighters were here last week, coming to lobby MPPs, in particular the government MPPs, about what the real issues are in terms of allowing them to do their job better. One of the items that struck me most was that if the government members were truly interested in being supportive of what firefighters do day in and day out, they would review the office of the fire marshal, so that when we have instances like we had in Midland, when firefighters are at a service level that doesn't allow them, in their opinion, to do their job like they want to do it, that actually puts a firefighter at peril

when he goes and responds to a call—those are very real issues for firefighters. I don't want to have to add to the list of those firefighters that we memorialize because we've lost lives because they spent the time for us fighting fires and we could have made the difference in allowing them to have the kind of fire service levels available in municipalities across Ontario that do right by the public.

Does the public have a right to know that their municipality has the right level of fire service? This is the role of the fire marshal. This, I contend, is what the fire marshal is not doing across Ontario today.

There are many other issues in the area of the health and safety of our firefighters. When our firefighters have to do battle repeatedly with the Ministry of Labour when there are issues over fires that have caused the illness in our firefighters, where we have an unprecedented level of a certain type of cancer among our firefighters and they go forward to the Ministry of Labour and say, "Please consider what you will look at as obviously work-related injuries"—we shouldn't have to fight and do battle with the government when it seems so clear that we as a government want to be supportive.

I applaud our member for bringing this forward, and even the member opposite who last week brought forward a private member's bill. But when the rubber hits the road and we are truly interested in helping our firefighters do their job, we have to discuss the very real issues that they face every day, through the fire marshal's office, through health and safety regulations for the very people who are saving our lives.

The Deputy Speaker: Response.

Mr Levac: I'm humbled and very pleased with the comments from the members from Simcoe North, Kingston and the Islands, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Prince Edward-Hastings, Niagara Centre, Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, Sudbury, St Catharines, Windsor West and Scarborough-Agincourt. I'm truly humbled by their comments and I appreciate the fact that they do recognize that this is simply a bill so that all of us could get around to saying thank you to our firefighters.

I have done my homework and I want to make it perfectly clear to the members of the House, in case they don't think so, that I have gotten responses back since I've introduced Bill 107, and the comments to me have been very clear and plain, from the fire chiefs, from the communities, from the mayors, from the firefighters themselves: they only want one day. That's all they've asked for. That's all they deserve. As a matter of fact, they didn't ask for it; they haven't asked for it. I'm presenting it and their feedback to me has been that they only want a day.

I want to make another comment. Earlier I had said something about the thermal imaging machines that we've been able to purchase in Brant—a total of six for our entire riding. I was informed just a couple of months ago that though thermal imaging has multiple uses, we actually have had confirmed by a couple of our firefighters that a life was saved with the use of a

thermal imager. I would challenge the ministry, I would challenge the government, to ensure that every single fire department in the province of Ontario has a thermal imager as part of its standard equipment across the province. I think it's necessary and I think it's needed.

I want to thank the member from Niagara Centre and the member from Windsor for their challenges. These challenges are important to take up. As much as this is strictly just a day to honour our fallen firefighters and their families, we need to start from here and move forward with correcting the problems that have been pointed out. The member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford wanted to take credit for an awful lot of the goods; I didn't hear him stand up and say that there were some problems that needed to be corrected. As has been pointed out from this side of the House and by the firefighters themselves, we need to do more in this Legislature to ensure the safety of the citizens of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: This completes the time allocated for this ballot item.

CANCER TREATMENT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item number 53. Mr Tascona has moved private member's notice of motion number 32. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

FIREFIGHTERS' MEMORIAL DAY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE JOUR DE COMMÉMORATION DES POMPIERS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item number 54. Mr Levac has moved second reading of Bill 107. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill will be referred to committee of the whole House.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I seek unanimous consent that Bill 107 be sent to the justice and social policy committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

All business relating to private members' public business now being complete, I will leave the chair, to return at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BRANT WALK OF FAME

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On Tuesday, December 5, I was honoured and privileged to co-host an event in my riding of Brant that I would like to bring to the attention of this House and to the citizens of Ontario. Having

founded and chaired the annual Walk of Fame, I am pleased to announce that we have completed the fourth instalment with three more very worthy inductees.

Mr Pat Goddin, born and raised in Brantford, now living in Paris, Ontario, is a six-time world champion wood carver of waterfowl. He's the Wayne Gretzky of this delicate, fine art form.

The Cockshutt family virtually revolutionized the farm implement industry and helped build Brantford from the bottom up during the Industrial Revolution. The family produced mayors, councillors, a Lieutenant Governor and provincial members of Parliament, all to the betterment of Brantford.

Finally, we honoured no less than 23 Olympians and para-Olympians from the past century, starting with Tom Longboat from the Six Nations, to Kevin Sullivan, our 1,500-metre track and field Canadian champion.

Our previous inductees include such notables as Doug Jarvis, the Ironman of the NHL; Dr James Hillier, scientist and inventor of the electron microscope; comedian Phil Hartman; Alexander Graham Bell; poetess Pauline Johnson; Arnold Anderson, a local sports radio broadcaster for over 50 years; Brantford's favourite father and civic booster, Walter Gretzky; and finally, Dr Emily Stowe, the first female doctor and principal in Ontario. The list goes on: Wayne Gretzky and others will be included.

The riding of Brant has proved itself to be a hotbed of talent, innovation and endless possibilities.

MUNICIPAL RECOGNITION AWARDS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Last week I attended the town of Georgina's municipal recognition awards in my riding of York North. The awards pay tribute to volunteers who have made a significant contribution to the municipality. The following people were presented with awards: Paul Harpley, for arts and culture; Henry "Bill" Kasper, sports mentor of the year; Doris Baker, senior citizen award of merit; Debbie Gordon and Yvonne MacKinnon, special recognition; Dalton Mercer, service recognition; Kaelea Campbell, junior citizen of the year; and Anne Pegg, citizen of the year.

Anne Pegg's award of citizen of the year is well deserved. Her list of community involvement and commitment is a long one. Her most recent volunteer activity is with the Trillium Foundation as chair of the grant review team. "Rewarding and educational" is how Anne describes her years of volunteer commitment.

Anne Pegg and the other recipients of the Georgina municipal awards are examples of why next year has been declared International Year of Volunteers. Volunteers from around the globe are gearing up for next year's celebration. The United Nations General Assembly declared the year to promote the activities of volunteers everywhere and to encourage many more people to donate time and energy to a worthy cause.

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2000 Georgina municipal recognition awards.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise again in this House to speak about the plight of the 200 community care case managers in the city of Hamilton who have been out on strike now for nine weeks as a result of this government's underfunding of home care in the Hamilton area. These 200 people deal with hospitals and discharge planning. They ensure people get the care they need in their home.

As a result of the strike, we've had emergency room meltdown in the city of Hamilton, we have hospital backlogs, we have longer stays, and this government continues to refuse to acknowledge the plight of these 200 people who do a tremendous job in our community. The reason they're on strike is that they are being paid less than other workers who do the same work in neighbouring municipalities. The reason they are on strike is because their caseloads are larger, because their working conditions do not allow them to deal with the people they are helping in our community.

This government has put blinders on, their heads in the sand. They have continued to ignore it. Nine weeks on the picket line while the health care crisis in Hamilton continues, while there's chaos in our hospitals, while there's chaos in emergency rooms. These people want to be back doing the job they're supposed to be doing; that is, helping people.

What makes it worse is that the CCAC management has brought in scab labour, scab workers, to try to do the work of these 200 trained professionals. They think nine or 10 clerical people can do the work that these people who are here in the audience today should be doing. It is a disgrace that that has happened. It is a disgrace that this government has allowed the strike to go on. I urge Elizabeth Witmer today to come to the table with the money necessary to properly fund the CCAC and get these people back to work where they belong, helping patients, and not on the picket lines, and to get those scabs out of the Hamilton office.

BOWMANVILLE ZOO

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'd like to invite the people of Ontario to visit my riding of Durham over the holiday season to witness something truly unique and fun for the whole family. Throughout December and into January, the Bowmanville Zoo is putting on a festive show with a bit of a twist called The Animals' Gift: Christmas in the Stable. This is a one-of-a-kind play featuring 50 of the zoo's animals and their trainers, Marcia Hendrickson, Jackie Borosa, Ted Strikwerda, Brad St John and Chris Vanderkooi.

Last year when Bowmanville Zoo owner Michael Hackenberger and the show's manager, Kelly Whitlock, staged this production, it attracted some 6,000 people over a one-month period. This season, even more people are expected to see this one-and-a-half-hour-long production of the original Christmas story.

Furthermore, I'm proud to report that the Ontario Ministry of Tourism has provided \$7,500 in funding for

the Bowmanville Zoo production through the Ontario Tourism Event Marketing Partnership program. The Bowmanville Zoo, established in 1919, is the oldest privately owned zoo in Canada, and several of its animals have appeared in films and television. The tourism program is designed to help increase attendance at a variety of community events in Ontario, which, as we know, helps local and regional economics and therefore benefits all the province.

I enjoyed the show myself. I invite everyone to participate this winter.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Shortly after our area was ordered to restructure into the city of greater Sudbury, I expressed concern to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing that, as is usual with the Harris Tories, ideology would take precedence over people and that funding needed for this transition would not be forthcoming.

While the Tory experts estimated restructuring costs to be \$12 million, the reality is that restructuring in my community has cost \$24 million. One year ago, I wrote to the minister asking him to treat the people of my region fairly. I pointed out that he had given the city of Toronto \$250 million for restructuring costs, and Chatham and its surrounding municipalities \$22 million in order to cover restructuring costs. I asked that my citizens, my community, be treated fairly. To date, I have not received a reply from the minister saying that he would do that.

Last June, the Tory-laden and -appointed transition board wrote a letter requesting that the minister cut a cheque for \$24 million. To date, no cheque has been cut; no response has been made. In a few days from now, Minister Clement will be attending the inaugural meeting of the city of greater Sudbury. I challenge this minister to bring with him a cheque for \$24 million to pay for the Tory municipal experiment in restructuring in Sudbury.

My community cannot afford \$24 million for your experiment. That \$24 million would pay for the David Street pumping station so that southern residents would be able to drink clean water; \$24 million would pay for the community share of our hospital restructuring, which is in a mess because of this government; and \$24 million would pay for infrastructure costs, much needed in my community. My community cannot afford your experiment any longer.

1340

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I rise today to join with my colleague from Hamilton East in condemning this government in your Pontius Pilate-like attitude toward the strike of 200 workers at the CCAC in Hamilton. I would point out it is exactly the same attitude you've taken toward teachers. The fact is that you control all the purse strings, you control all the legislation, and yet whenever we have major disruptions and turmoil in

our communities, you say it's up to local entities to solve the problem. The fact of the matter is that you've underfunded community health care. You've underfunded our education system. You are the cause of all of these strikes.

Further to that, at the Hamilton CCAC we now have scabs. Prior to your taking power, there were laws in Ontario under the NDP that prohibited scabs. They were illegal. You have now made it possible for this unnecessary, unwanted strike to continue. There are 200 workers, many of whom are here in the gallery today to look you, Minister, right in the eye and say to you that you have an obligation. This is your failed managed competition system. It's your failed funding system that has caused these workers to be out on strike. All they ask for, all they're seeking here today, is fairness and justice, and all they receive from you is the back of your hand.

This government has an obligation. Given that you created the problem, that you are the one who has put Hamilton patients as well as these Hamilton workers into the situation they're in, you have an obligation to provide a solution, and that solution is money. We know the hospital system is in crisis, emergency wards are in crisis, and this strike is just adding to that. You have an obligation to step in and provide adequate funding for community health care, just as much as you have an obligation to step in and provide health care funding for hospitals.

I'm pleased to stand here for as long as I can—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Sorry about that. It would have been a long afternoon if somebody hadn't stepped forward. Thank you.

AIMING FOR THE TOP SCHOLARSHIPS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise today to show my appreciation for the hard work and academic achievement by the Aiming for the Top tuition scholarship winners in my riding and across the province. I am very impressed with the average mark of scholarship of almost 88%, and I understand that more than 1,500 winners graduated with marks of 90% or higher. The dedication and quality of the recipients certainly are reflected by these marks.

Our government is committed to helping every willing and motivated student to receive a post-secondary education. Aiming for the Top is a new Ontario government program that recognizes hard-working students who earn top marks. I also would like to acknowledge the role played by the parents, teachers and principals who helped the students achieve this award.

Please join me in congratulating this year's Aiming for the Top tuition scholarship winners.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): As each month passes, the doctor shortage in St Catharines and Niagara becomes more acute. For individuals whose

family doctors have retired, fallen victim to illness themselves, passed away or moved to a new location, their situation becomes a genuine crisis as they attempt to enlist the services of a diminishing number of physicians, many of whom are simply unable to accept new patients.

At last count, the Niagara region was short at least 78 physicians, including both family doctors and specialists. An objective and accurate assessment would likely reveal that many doctors resident in Niagara are approaching the normal age for retirement and, for some, this point is only a few years away.

Hospital emergency wards and walk-in clinics are the only option for people who do not wish to or are unable to travel beyond the borders of Niagara to receive health services from a family physician or the services of an ophthalmologist or other specialist.

Ontario must begin to graduate far more physicians, surgeons, family doctors and specialists to meet the urgent needs of a growing and aging population, and special incentive programs must be accelerated and expanded to encourage these essential medical practitioners to locate in St Catharines and Niagara. If this requires a substantial investment of funds, forget about further politically attractive tax cuts for the rich and devote government revenues to an area that surely all residents would consider to be essential.

ST THERESA'S HIGH SCHOOL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to inform the House of a very pleasant experience I had when I visited St Theresa's High School in the town of Midland last Friday. At the invitation of school principal Richard Pressé, I was able to spend the morning. With keen interest, I toured the school with Principal Pressé. I discussed technical programs and the shortage of skilled tradespeople with instructors Richard Belanger and Mark Stewart. I visited the cafeteria, where students work in a co-op program preparing food for the students and staff. I was able to have a round table discussion with president Katie Breckbill and her student council and their teacher adviser. I was able to spend time with representatives of the parent council. I was able to meet with teacher Sean Mei and visit his very unique audio and video studio, where students make their own recordings and have their own cable TV show, STTV. I was able to spend time with teachers who told me first-hand their concerns with extracurricular work.

St Theresa's is a school growing at a rapid rate, I believe because of the school spirit and bonding and the highly motivated and professional staff. Parents in the Huronia region of my riding often choose St Theresa's as the school they prefer their children to attend. After experiencing an expansion only two years ago, already the growth has meant the school is at full capacity with an additional 26 portables this fall.

The purpose of my visit was very simple. Everyone wanted me to see first-hand the growth that was occurring and problems the school was experiencing with

reforms to education. However, they painted their picture in a very professional manner, using constructive criticism and suggestions for improving our system. I've been invited to return to the school in the new year and plan to do so. In the meantime, I thank Richard Pressé, his staff, his students and his parent council for allowing me the opportunity to visit St Theresa High School.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 101, An Act to promote snowmobile trail sustainability and enhance safety and enforcement / Projet de loi 101, Loi visant à favoriser la durabilité des pistes de motoneige et à accroître la sécurité et les mesures d'exécution.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NIAGARA ESCARPMENT PROTECTION ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'ESCARPEMENT DU NIAGARA

Mr Murdoch moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 157, An Act to revise the law relating to the Protection of the Niagara Escarpment and the Surrounding Wetlands / Projet de loi 157, Loi révisant la loi concernant la protection de l'Escarpeement du Niagara et des terres marécageuses environnantes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): It's my pleasure to introduce the Niagara Escarpment Protection Act, 2000, to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. This act, if passed, will allow the Minister of Natural Resources to designate the Niagara Escarpment and surrounding wetlands as a natural area of each municipality within the area, if the designation approves. When the minister makes a designation, the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act is repealed.

Development of the natural areas is prohibited unless the municipality where the land is situated approves. Then this development must be approved in this House. Basically this act abolishes the Niagara Escarpment Commission, a move I believe should have happened years ago. Abolishing the Niagara Escarpment Commission will save the taxpayers of this province over \$4 million, and this money in turn could be used to buy the land. In short, this is a common sense bill and it should have been used a long time ago.

1350

MARRIAGE AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE MARIAGE

Mr Murdoch moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 158, An Act to amend the Marriage Act / Projet de loi 158, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le mariage.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): It's my pleasure to introduce the Marriage Amendment Act, 2000. This act, if passed, will create a new position in the province of Ontario: a marriage commissioner. I don't know if many of my colleagues are aware of this; however, it is difficult if not impossible to have non-denominational marriage ceremonies performed in rural and northern Ontario. That is why I've introduced this act. Through it, six marriage commissioners will be appointed in each of the 103 electoral districts in Ontario by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. These commissioners will be able to perform marriages during their three-year term, much like justices of the peace performed marriages in the past.

Marriage is a sacred institution. It should not be entered into lightly, nor should it be any less of a celebration of a life-long union. A religious ceremony has always been an option in this province. Up to a few years ago a non-denominational ceremony was also an option. The Marriage Act will restore this second option to the people of Ontario.

PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION PRIVACY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA CONFIDENTIALITÉ DES RENSEIGNEMENTS PERSONNELS SUR LA SANTÉ

Mrs Witmer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act respecting Personal Health Information and related matters / Projet de loi 159, Loi concernant les renseignements personnels sur la santé et traitant de questions connexes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister for a short statement?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I will be making a statement during statement time.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wish I had been able to tell you about this beforehand, but if you'll just give me a second here, a senior professor at the University of Toronto made a chilling comparison of women who came out to mourn the 14 women murdered in Montreal to the Ku Klux Klan. I want to say that people who nurture this kind of hatred toward women are as dangerous as the man who pulled the trigger and should be sanctioned.

I'm asking for unanimous consent for the Minister of Colleges and Universities to condemn these comments on behalf of all of us in this Legislature.

The Speaker: The member is asking the minister to make a statement. Agreed? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

VISITOR

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm pleased to introduce, in the west members' gallery, Daniel Di Cocco, who is the son of our colleague Carolyn Di Cocco from Sarnia-Lambton. Welcome.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION PRIVACY LEGISLATION

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I rise in the house today to introduce a piece of legislation that is critical to the inherent right of each and every Ontarian to be assured of privacy and accessibility when it comes to their own personal health information.

Before I continue, I would like to express my thanks to Phil Jackson, Jutta Auksi, Gilbert Sharpe, Liam Scott, Halyna Perun, Mary Marshall, Carole Appathurai and all of their colleagues in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for their very hard work in bringing us to where we are today.

Today I'm pleased to introduce the Personal Health Information Privacy Act, PHIPA. This legislation is necessary to protect the privacy and confidentiality of people's health information in a modern and much more integrated health care system. Perhaps no information about individuals is more sensitive than their personal health information. That's why we need clear rules in place, rules that tell people how their personal health information will be protected, rules that tell people in the health system what steps they need to take to make sure the information is used at the right time and only under the right circumstances, for the right purposes.

Our government is moving forward with some of the most significant and necessary reforms to the delivery of primary care services ever undertaken in this province. We are moving toward a better patient-centred system of care, where doctors, nurses and other health professionals will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Our primary care reform and modernization will manifest itself in a wide variety of services, including smart systems, hospital report cards and the new Tele-health Ontario service. The end result will be a system that offers Ontarians easier and more convenient access to health professionals.

The Personal Health Information Privacy Act is the cornerstone for primary care reform. The health sector has unique, specialized needs when it comes to the sharing of patient information, needs that are fundamental to the provision of quality, seamless care, to research into new treatments and cures, and to better integration of health services among health service providers.

We have heard from the health care community about the need for health service providers to have the information they need to deliver the best possible care for patients. We have also listened to health professionals and providers who have raised some very valid concerns about the federal privacy legislation, Bill C-6. They have told us that the rules that apply to buying books on the Internet will not serve patients well in an emergency room.

That is why our government has developed this legislation: to ensure the protection of individual privacy as we move to a reformed and enhanced system of effective, integrated health care. This marks the first time in Ontario that a consistent and comprehensive approach has been taken to protect personal health information that is collected, used and disclosed within the health system.

Indeed, it may interest people in this House to know that 20 years ago an Ontario royal commission actually called for these comprehensive reforms. In fact, both the current and the former Ontario privacy commissioners and our opposition health critic have called for comprehensive legislation. Our government is now responding to these demands.

These efforts support our government's commitment to strengthen the rights of all Ontarians to access complete health information, including records and test results, but also to ensure their privacy concerning their own personal health and personal health records.

The legislation I'm introducing today addresses a number of key objectives, including protecting the confidentiality, the privacy and the security of personal health information for each and every Ontarian; ensuring that patients have a right to access their health records; improving the quality of care for patients by ensuring that their personal information is available to the health professionals treating them; improving health system integration for continuity of patient care; improving health system management and performance measurement, and the prevention of fraud; and finally, maximizing the benefits of health technology and other health system resources.

To create this legislation, we have conducted a series of extensive consultations that began in June 1996, when we first distributed a consultation paper entitled *A Legal Framework for Health Information* and launched regional round table meetings.

In November 1997, we released a draft act for discussion entitled *Personal Health Information Protection Act, 1997*, and again, there were further regional round table meetings.

1400

A third and final round of consultations took place this fall, led by John O'Toole, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, on my behalf. At that time, we distributed about 5,000 copies of a policy document entitled *Proposed Personal Health Information Privacy Legislation for the Health Sector*. I am very pleased to say that we did hear numerous presentations and we received more than 100 written submissions in response.

We have met with professional associations, physicians, nurses, psychologists, health service provider associations, regulatory bodies, researchers, advocacy groups, privacy and health law consultants, affected groups and, most importantly, members of the public. This is an exhaustive list and it is indicative of the extent to which we have sought advice in drafting this piece of legislation. To introduce this bill at this time will provide us with the opportunity for further consultation. It will give us another opportunity to hear from Ontarians about this important government initiative.

It is critical because it will ensure that effective protections are in place when health information needs to be shared to provide better patient care. It is critical, above all else, because it will strengthen the confidentiality and the security of personal health information.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): We have to say at the outset, when the government rises in the House to talk about bringing in legislation to save the public, to try to protect the public's privacy, we have very grave concerns.

Let's do just a brief history since I've been in the House, where we had a Ministry of Health—the same administration that is speaking in the House today—whose own minister had to resign because a member of their staff released information about a doctor's salary: a matter of privacy, released for all the world to see, and we could read about it in the pages of the *Globe*.

Not too distant from then, we had a minister of corrections who was forced to step aside because from this same government administration we had members of staff preparing documents to be read into the record, so that our Lieutenant Governor could stand in the House and read the names that identified young offenders.

Fast-forward a couple of years and we have this same offence being committed by the same government under the same administration where, just Monday of this week, the member for Northumberland resigned his post as parliamentary assistant because he created an offence

by naming young offenders in this House—again, an issue of privacy. To add to that, the Minister of Correctional Services—again the same ministry making the same error in releasing private information—steps aside and is forced to resign.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): And POSO.

Mrs Pupatello: Let's talk about POSO. We all remember where we were stunned to learn that thousands upon thousands of names and account balances under the Province of Ontario Savings Office, the bank of the province, were released to a private firm in order to do polling. The only way that came to light was when members of the public, with their account balances, received a call. They said, "How and why is my private information being released to a private company?" This is the same administration under Mike Harris.

Let's not forget the Ministry of Transportation, which released thousands upon thousands of names of drivers and licence information to, again, a private company, the same kind of privacy information that ought not to be in some hands. This is the same administration that stands in the House today.

May I say, there were over 180 submissions when this first draft came forward in 1997 and most of those submissions were highly critical of what the government was proposing in the area of protecting the privacy of individuals. It is this Ontario government that requested to be exempted from the federal legislation around privacy. It is this administration that said, "We've got to hive off the chunk relating to health," because this government wants something to do with private information about its citizens in the use and delivery of health services, and we ask why. Today, like never before in the province of Ontario, we have the advent of private companies in the area of health care delivery. I ask the question to the Minister of Health, what information will be flowing from my personal records to private companies that I won't be aware of? There are a host of questions that we have to ask.

The record of this government is not good to be bringing this forward. It is not a record where the public will say, "I trust Mike Harris with my personal information." That is not how the public feels. You've been caught on a number of counts through a number of ministries without having any regard for private information. Just this week, when we asked a member to withdraw remarks immediately when they were made, that member stood with a big grin, "No, no, I am not withdrawing," without even realizing the force with which he had broken the law, and it wasn't the first time within this same area that a law had been broken.

This is the government that today wants us to believe that they have the best interests of the public at heart in advancing this kind of legislation? I think not. The public is going to want to know, line by line by line, what it is proposing we do with private, personal medical information. Just this week a doctor expressed concern under the ODFC disability form that doctors sign chits for transportation. A different minister, yes, but nevertheless still a point, that by signing a transportation chit in order to

pay for transportation, we identify the kinds of illnesses that these people who are on disability have.

If it is truly the intent of government to protect the privacy of individuals, it ought to flow across all ministries of this government. I look forward to intense scrutiny of this bill with the many groups that are going to want to see line by line exactly how we, the public, will be defended by the laws of Ontario.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I want to begin by joining my colleague who just raised the issue of the history of this government and your track record in dealing with privacy information. I won't repeat the very full list of infractions that this government has already committed with regard to the sanctity of citizens' personal information, both the moral issue and the legal issue.

I remind members of the government that with regard to the Province of Ontario Savings Office scandal, you still have stonewalled any attempt on the part of the opposition to force you to comply with the privacy commissioner's request for certain powers so that a complete review can be undertaken of what exactly happened in that case. To date, we have still not seen this government act.

You're far too comfortable in allowing things to be brushed under the carpet. It wasn't until there was a leaked story in the *Globe and Mail* that the whole issue of Ontarians' personal financial information being leaked was brought to the attention of the public. Where is your response to our demand that you give the privacy commissioner the powers needed to review this, not in some political witch hunt, but to determine what happened and make sure it doesn't happen again? Yet, you expect us to believe that you have the interests of Ontarians at heart when we're dealing with information arguably that's second to none in terms of its importance. You've already got a track record of divulging citizens' financial information. What on earth would lead the people of Ontario to believe that you're going to treat their medical information with any more sanctity?

Further to that, if this is all about the citizens of Ontario and it's all about patients, and you make reference to what you committed to do in the Blueprint, where is your patients' bill of rights? Marion Boyd, a previous member of the NDP caucus, presented to you in this House a number of years ago a patients' bill of rights that set out all the things that you say you want to give to Ontarians in terms of protection, and yet you've done nothing. Where's the patients' bill of rights? What's holding it up? Why are you not completing the job that's at hand?

1410

Further, there are some real concerns—and we're going to be looking very closely at this legislation—with regard to what you're doing by regulation. This government has shown a serious inclination to move things out of the legislative side, which means taking it off the floor of the Legislature, and putting it into the regulative side of things. Regulations, as we all know, are passed in cabinet, in secret, behind closed doors.

So first we want to make sure the protections are in place in the law that ultimately passes in this House, but we also want to make sure that the law is structured in such a way that you can't change the protections that are in there by regulation, which you've already got a track record of doing.

We also share with the Registered Nurses' Association a serious concern that all personal information needs to be captured by this legislation. We can't afford to leave anything out. If anything, the experience of this government shows us that we need to have an airtight law that covers our medical information regardless of who collects it or where it comes from. To date, given the fact that we only had about 10 minutes to deal with this prior to coming into the House, we don't know whether those kinds of protections are in this legislation, but we are going to be looking very closely to ensure that you do cover that off.

Lastly, let me say to you that we know there are serious concerns about the ability to receive consent from those who are incapable by law of providing it for themselves. We need to ensure that there's a process that works for those individuals and that the family members or the caregivers are a part of that decision-making, and again we'll be looking very closely at your legislation to ensure it does that.

In summary, let me say that the NDP caucus is quite prepared to participate in a non-partisan way to look at developing this legislation. Whether or not you can do that on this issue, given your track record, remains to be seen.

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): It is now time for question period.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We were given to understand that the Minister of Labour would be here for question period today.

The Speaker: I believe I did see him wandering around here. We'll just maybe take a minute for the Minister of Labour. Here he comes.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Labour. The minister is probably aware, as all members of the government side are, of the Premier's intense focus on family. The Vanier Institute of the Family had a release just this past November 20, and the question they ask is, "Who Has Time For Children?" As the Vanier Institute describes in it, with today's life, busy working parents have less and less time for their children.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Labour, in your bill that you've introduced in the House and that we are now debating, how does the possible extension of the work-

week to 60 hours by employers for their employees make life easier for families and their children?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): If the individual does not want to agree to work more than 48 hours, they don't have to.

Mrs Papatello: I think that you as a minister, of all ministers in the cabinet, probably know what it's like to be told what to do by your boss and have to do it.

What becomes clear is that this bill you've brought forward that, among other things, extends the potential of the workweek to 60 hours for those individuals who work in a non-unionized environment and don't have the luxury of reviewing their contract, of having union representatives follow that they're working the regulated number of hours as prescribed by a contract—those in a non-unionized shop, in particular young people, in particular women, in particular new Canadians, don't have that luxury. They already struggle in the workplace to be able to say no.

Your bill says "voluntary" throughout, but the reality in the workplace, in these kinds of workplaces, is that it's hard to say no, and in fact they feel intimidated and have to work. So the impact on the family and children in particular is great.

To the minister, I ask you again: for young people, for women, for new Canadians, how does your extension of the workweek to 60 hours help these people?

Hon Mr Stockwell: First off, I enjoy taking orders from my bosses, all 103,000 of them who live in Etobicoke Centre.

Further, we've put some big teeth into this bill when it comes to inspections. We've given more power to the inspectors to spot-audit, to audit when an anonymous tip comes in from an employee. We've given them powers to reinstate. We've given them anti-reprisal powers. These are powers that the unions have been asking for for decades.

So if you're telling me that there isn't anything in here the unions asked for—there is. They asked for powers to be implemented for the inspector to reinstate, anti-reprisals, to spot-audit anonymous tips. These things happen, and they happen in non-unionized shops.

If you're asking if there are bad employers out there, yes, I agree there are some bad employers. It's up to us, as an obligation, to give the inspectors teeth so we can get in there, protect vulnerable workers and do the job we were elected to do.

Mrs Papatello: This government keeps saying that it's bringing in policies that are helpful to children. What I'm saying is that your bill doesn't do this. The legal aid clinics studied the bill and said that immigrants, young, new Canadians, are going to have trouble because they already have trouble today in the workplace.

I ask you very specifically, what does Dr Fraser Mustard say about your legislation that's going to extend the workweek to 60 hours, keeping in mind that your government says it's here to bring in policies that are friendly for children? What does Dr Fraser Mustard say about your extension of the workweek to 60 hours?

Hon Mr Stockwell: The trouble is that they keep saying it so they think this is going to be a fact. We're not extending the workweek to 60 hours. Before, you just got a permit and you could extend it beyond 48 hours. The question very clearly is, what's the legislation going to say? A maximum of 48 work hours per week, end of discussion. If an employee agrees with proper authorities and signing, they can work longer hours.

I want to tell you something. We're a progressive province, very progressive. Seven of the 10 provinces in this country don't even have maximum work hours. We are one of the few that have limited, capped, the work hours. We're friendly for the children and workers of this province. We're so friendly we've created 800,000 jobs. They want to go to work, they want to earn their money, and we are going to protect them.

SCHOOLTEACHERS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. I wonder if I can direct you to dealing with some of the consequences of the poisoned environment the Education Improvement Commission talked about yesterday that you've created and that's hurting kids.

People know that in Bill 74 you brought in the Ecker standard and that has helped to cancel extracurricular activities all around the province. But it is also, we're learning now, lowering the quality of instruction. Six times as many teachers gained temporary approval letters from the College of Teachers because they are being forced to teach subjects they're not qualified for. As well, there are unqualified people, people who are not teachers, now at the front of the classroom in record numbers.

Minister, for the benefit of parents out there who think their kids are entitled to qualified instruction, can you tell us today how many letters of permission has your ministry given out to unqualified people because you have poisoned the environment for good teachers to come to work in this province? And will you tell us, what the heck are you going to do about it today?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I'd like to remind the Liberals yet again, because they seem to keep forgetting it, that the recent international test results, the TIMSS report, as it's called, actually show that Ontario's results on the testing that they do show that our hard-working teachers are making a difference in the learning abilities of our students. As a province, we said we would be setting higher quality standards across the system. We are indeed doing that, and we are seeing improved student learning. That's certainly what parents want to see, and that's certainly what teachers want to see. I think it's important for them. I'm quite prepared to thank the sector for the work they have done on that.

Secondly, as the honourable member should know if he has taken his briefings, for the system to have flexibility and for school boards to have letters of permission—that is not a new process. That has been in existence for many years.

1420

Mr Kennedy: What we want to talk about, though, is what's happening now, today. We want you to talk about the letters of permission that are there in record numbers at various boards around the province. This is what principals are receiving in the Catholic school board in Toronto. It says, "Give us the names of the unqualified emergency supplies that have some teacher training. Personnel will review their files and might offer them a one-year teacher position. Tell us who your education assistants and child and youth workers are, because we may give them teaching permission certificates as well."

The children of this province have every right to expect quality teachers in front of their classes. We have quality teachers in this province whom you have scared into retirement, whom you have discouraged from teaching, and now we have an acute problem of your creation. If you're so proud of your record and your contribution to the quality of instruction, table with us today how many letters of permission you've been forced to give out to the boards in this province, and tell us what you're going to do about the lower quality of instruction that you've created in this province.

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, the honourable member again is missing the point. The test results I'm talking about and the improved student learning I'm talking about are recent. Those reports were released this week.

Secondly, as the honourable member again should know, every profession in North America, whether we're talking about doctors, police, bricklayers, managers, nurses, teachers, lawyers, all of these professions are being hit with the demographic trend, where the population is getting older, the majority of people are retirement age.

The other interesting thing is, I'm very surprised to hear the honourable member's negative comments talking about early retirement. It was the teacher groups who asked for an early retirement option for their members. They asked for it. They put their money on the table for it; the government put their money on the table for it. It was a co-operative effort. We responded to the requests from the federations and so, of course, that is encouraging more retirements right now. I would hope the honourable member is not saying he would like us to go back to the teacher groups—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

Mr Kennedy: I think by now there must be parents out there hoping this minister's time is up.

Minister, if you would address the question directly—you can't avoid it—you have to tell us how many unqualified teachers you're being forced to authorize in this province. If you're afraid to answer that, I think that's going to go well remarked.

Minister, 4,414 teachers got out of teaching last year for reasons other than retirement, and you should know that. They left because of conditions you've created. That's a 23% increase in one year. Over 10% of the teachers we trained in this province did not register to

teach in this province. That's a doubling in one year. We lost over 600 student teachers who were trained in this province. They're not going to be teaching here. The reason they're not teaching here is because of the way you've poisoned the environment for teachers. You've come up with this Ecker standard that doesn't work anywhere, that you took out of Durham and put all around the province.

Your reckless policies that aren't working are robbing children of their education, of quality instruction. Again, will you table the number of letters of permission you've been forced to issue? Will you do it today, and will you tell us how you're going to put peace back in the schools and get teachers to want to teach in Ontario again?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Perhaps we would have teachers who might be willing to teach in Ontario if the Liberals would stop telling teachers how terrible everything is in the system. As I meet with teachers, they want to hear people in public life talk about the positive things in the sector, talk about things like improved test results. I'm quite prepared to thank the teachers for the work that has created those results. The honourable member across the way obviously is not.

The other thing I think the honourable member again should understand is that school boards are in charge of hiring and putting in place in classrooms people who are qualified, who have the skills that are necessary, and I find again the insulting tone he takes to those many people who are providing good service in our classrooms.

Finally, if he's opposed to letters of permission, why did his government grant them when they were in power?

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Housing. Today the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee unveiled an immediate solution to homelessness. It's a made-in-Canada solution. It's prefabricated housing we're talking about that in my view avoids warehousing people in shelters or leaving them to freeze in the street. It's a very cheap solution to the kinds of problems we're experiencing, so I'm asking you to provide the kind of safety and the kind of dignity that homeless people are looking for and asking you to fund this housing so that homeless people have a real alternative to the streets.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): We are looking at both short-term and long-term solutions. As the honourable member is aware, this is a very complex issue. It's not only the question of a venue of housing or shelter; there are also many complex health issues, many complex mental health issues which my colleague the Honourable Minister of Health has attended to in her most recent announcements of mental health supports for those who are at risk of being homeless or who are homeless. That is also part of the solution.

So it's not only the venue, it's not only having a space available; it is all of the other supports which this

government is taking the lead on in its \$100-million approach to our portion of tackling the homeless issue. We have also facilitated the creation of single-room occupancy units through our changes to the building code. All of these things will help. Perhaps the honourable member's suggestions will help when the federal government puts its two cents' worth in as well.

Mr Marchese: I know that we can blame the federal government, and God knows they're to blame for not helping out; this is true. But I'm looking to you for a solution and I know that you have one. It's within our grasp. I also know you have a home and that homeless people don't have one. So it's all right for you to say it's complex, but for homeless persons it's easy: they're looking for a home.

This is a very cheap solution to the homelessness they're experiencing. We're talking about a \$6,000 home that you can afford to pay for because you've got the money. As a government we have the money. I'm saying to you that the cost of a solution is far less than the price we pay for allowing this problem to continue. Far less.

It's minus 20 degrees out there and people are living in this kind of inclement weather where 31 people have already died. It's not that they're going to die; 31 have already died. It's not enough for you to say it's complex. They need a home first and then you and the Minister of Social Services can work out how to provide the extra support.

I'm looking to you for leadership. Or am I supposed to ask you, why is it that you still have "housing" in your title?

Hon Mr Clement: For him to attack a government that is spending over \$2 billion a year for supports for those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless through our rent geared to income, through our shelter allowances—I would say to the honourable member that we need a bit more than rhetoric here. I'm not trying to sweep away the problem by describing its complexity. It is important to understand, however, that the issue is more than innovative approaches, and I agree they are innovative, to build cheaper units that could be used in such a fashion.

We have to find the land; we have to make sure it is serviced; we have to make sure that all the other amenities that are important for life support are there. That is why we have taken a complex issue and have had a multifaceted response. That is why the Minister of Health is involved, that is why the Minister of Community and Social Services is involved, because we understand that it is a complex issue and we share—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The time is up. Final supplementary.

1430

Mr Marchese: I don't think I have to ask for your resignation as Minister of Housing, because you've already abdicated that responsibility a long time ago.

Why is it rhetoric for me to say to you that people have come up with a very cheap solution to this problem and you're calling it rhetoric? I don't understand that.

Then you say you're spending \$2 billion, and I say to you we were spending \$2 billion when we were in government. It's not new money. It's the same money we were spending when we were in government.

This is a solution that is easy to find. People here in Toronto are paying \$683 for an average bachelor apartment—if you can find it for that price. And thanks to your cuts, welfare pays \$325 a month for shelter. It means that people are being driven out on streets. They can't afford it: \$683 is the cheapest; you give \$325. People can't afford it.

Minister, why don't you feel just a little responsibility to fix that mess that in my view you have created—just a little responsibility? Why?

Hon Mr Clement: With all due respect to my honourable friend, I don't believe he or his party have cornered the market on compassion and concern when it comes to this issue. If I were to be partisan and rhetorical, I would be dragging up all the mistakes that his government made when it came to affordable housing and on these issues. I will not do that, because I think we're all searching for solutions together.

I say to the honourable member, it is a complex issue. There are issues of health, there are issues of mental health, there are issues of socio-economic status. They have to be tackled from the point of view of community and social services, of health, as well as housing. We are working on it together.

We have removed some of the barriers to affordable housing creation in this province. We have made it cheaper to build and construct affordable housing. We have made it easier to build single-room occupancy units that are available for persons who are in need and we have added \$50 million of rent-geared-to-income for these types of housing.

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is now to the Minister of Education. Minister, you are ignoring the extracurricular meltdown in our schools. The president of OSSTF asked for an emergency meeting with you today and all he got was a flat-out no. The teachers have taken the Education Improvement Commission's warnings about extracurricular activities to heart and they have said to you, "We are coming with a clear mandate to solve this problem." Why, Minister, haven't you cleared your agenda to find time to meet with the president of the OSSTF so you can come to a solution to this problem?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I'm very interested in how the honourable member across the way knows what my schedule is for the next couple of days, the next week, since there has been no "no" given to any teacher leader who has asked for a meeting. As a matter of fact, I'm assuming Mr Manners will be attending the regularly scheduled Ontario Teachers' Federation meeting that I have on a regular basis with all the affiliates,

and I would be very surprised if the agenda does not include some of the important issues that we need to continue to talk about in order to resolve. Our students deserve extracurricular activities. They're part of the education services they should be getting, and as I've said many times, we need to take steps to ensure that we are resolving this as the union negotiations are being completed in board after board.

Mr Marchese: Minister, this crisis requires your immediate attention. The president of OSSTF has asked to meet with you today. They called as late as 1 o'clock in the afternoon. You would think that as this crisis is so important to parents, to students, to many organizations out there, you would say, "If the president calls, I'm clearing my agenda and meeting with this man," as opposed to saying, "I hope this man will come at the regularly scheduled meeting so we can talk about this problem." This man has asked for an emergency meeting with you today so you could meet perhaps this evening or tomorrow morning or any time tomorrow. You said no.

The EIC warned about reduced achievement and increasing high school dropouts if you don't act, and you don't have the time to meet with Earl Manners? I think that you are wilfully avoiding a solution to the crisis—wilfully avoiding a solution. Minister, I say to you, if you can't make the time on this important issue, just resign.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Maybe Earl Manners asked you for a meeting with me. Earl—

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Speaker, if you'd like to call the honourable member to order, I'd be very happy to answer his question.

Mr Manners and I are speaking today, to the honourable member. No one has said no to any meetings. But as I have said many times, we have a meeting scheduled already with all of the affiliates, which I think is extremely important. If Mr Manners wants to meet with me separately and privately, I have met with union leaders before on that basis. I'm prepared. I think the fact that he has made that offer is a very helpful step and I'm very pleased to meet with union leaders to talk about the issues that we have here. We know there are students who are suffering because some teachers are choosing to work to rule. I don't think that's acceptable, and I know that many people in the—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

SCHOOLTEACHERS

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): We'd like to return to the serious question we're asking the Minister of Education. In the Blueprint that you ran on in the last election, you told the general public and you told parents, "It's common sense to make sure that our teachers are the best qualified and skilled professionals." That's what you said. I ask the Minister of Education: are parents aware that these applications are coming across the ministry's desk now by the hundreds for your authorization to put

people in front of students who are not qualified? We'd like to ask this Minister of Education today, how many people are you putting in the classroom—these pretend teachers—how many of them are you today putting in front of students, who are not qualified to teach? What is that number?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): First of all, letters of permission are a way for employers, the school boards, to ensure that qualified people can be there for classrooms when that is needed. That is a system that was in place when the honourable member's party was in government and when the NDP was in government. There are many people who have qualifications which can be useful in a classroom, and I do find it rather insulting that they make this judgment that somehow or other a person that a board is hiring is somehow not going to be capable of dealing with the circumstances with which they are being asked to deal.

We know we have a problem with the number of teachers, as we have in many other professions. That's not unique to Ontario. That's happening Canada-wide, it's happening North America-wide and it's even happening in other countries. That's one of the reasons that at the last meeting with the Ontario Teachers' Federation, we are putting in place and talking about ways—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

Mrs Pupatello: If we had lawyers practising law without a licence, they wouldn't be allowed to practise law. Doctors don't practise without a medical licence. You have—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member, take a seat please. The member for Durham is out of his seat. If you're going to yell some comments, you've got to be in your seat. Sorry for the interruption.

Mrs Pupatello: These other professions have to be qualified in order to practise in Ontario. You don't have doctors without a licence.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member, take a seat. Order. That's enough from the member from Brampton Centre, or he'll be out. We're not going to stand up here and challenge each other across the floor and act like a bunch of kids in grade 8. It's ridiculous. That's the last warning for you—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Now you do it, and now you're going to be named. I name the member, and you're out for doing that. Member Joe Spina is being named and I ask him to leave.

If you want to behave like children, you're going to be treated like children.

Mr Spina was escorted from the chamber.

1440

The Speaker: Let me say this: I'm not going to tolerate any conduct like that. Challenge people across the floor—it's disgraceful.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to speak to this

incident, because it may help you to understand what has taken place.

The Speaker: It's not a point of order. I understand what has taken place; I've dealt with it. The member take his seat. We're going to continue on.

Member for Windsor West.

Mrs Pupatello: Thank you, Speaker. This minister's own Education Improvement Commission had this to say in a report addressed to you about the Durham Catholic board, which is in your own riding: "Like many other Ontario boards, the Durham Catholic board is experiencing a shortage of qualified occasional teachers, and often must use uncertified occasional teachers."

The point is that we have a growing reliance on people who are not qualified to be in front of children. We ask this Minister of Education: how many people today are standing in front of our children in the classroom who are not qualified to be there? There is no such comparison to other professions. If you're a lawyer, you've been to law school. If you're a doctor, you've been to medical school. It is not a fair comparison. These individuals, by the hundreds, are in front of our children now. I ask this Minister of Education to tell us now how many people are in front of our children. Our parents are not aware that when they send their kids to school every day it's a crapshoot as to whether they get a certified teacher teaching them today in this province.

Hon Mrs Ecker: We quite recognize that there is a challenge in terms of making sure that we have enough qualified teachers to be standing in front of our classrooms. We understand that.

That is something that is happening in every province across this country, I say to the honourable member, who again hasn't checked the research. Also it's happening not just in Ontario but in Canada. That's one of the reasons why the teachers' federations and the government are talking about further steps that can be taken so we can resolve this. For example, we already have expanded spaces in teachers' college. Some 6,000 new extra teachers will be coming forward who will be available for the Ontario system.

The other thing that is interesting to note is that by the research and data that's indicated, as all the provinces struggle with this particular issue, Ontario has actually done better at hiring teachers to fill these spots. So we're going to continue—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a question for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I'm concerned with recent news articles regarding the strike by unionized staff of the Hamilton-Wentworth Community Care Access Centre. The opposition continues to imply that the strike has had a negative effect on emergency departments in Hamilton. As you know, emergency departments in my riding have seen an increase in volume of patients because of doctors

shortages at both West Haldimand and Norfolk General, but I fail to see the impact on Hamilton hospitals by a CCAC strike. Is there cause for concern over the impact of service delivery in Hamilton during this strike?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): First of all, we need to be mindful of the fact that this is a labour dispute between the CCAC and their staff, and although the ministry does not get involved in labour disputes, we certainly do monitor the situation on an ongoing basis. I have been informed that to date all eligible service requests have been met, and also, we have been informed by the Hamilton hospitals that the strike has not had an impact on their emergency departments nor on their ability to discharge patients from the hospitals.

We do know that the CCAC is going to be working with the local hospitals in order to plan and to ensure that they can continue to respond to the requests for home care and facility placements during the holiday season.

Mr Barrett: I also wish to acknowledge on behalf of the board of our local Haldimand-Norfolk Community Care Access Centre the 2% increase in base budget announced in September. In fact, I just received a letter today from board chair Don Hart. They're most grateful; however, they also are under continued financial pressure, but they are taking measures.

But back to Hamilton: Minister, could you tell this House what our government has done to improve community care services in the Hamilton area?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Ontario has one of the most generous home care programs in the country. In fact, we are spending the highest per capita, approximately \$128; second is the province of Manitoba. I also think I need to add that six of 10 provinces charge co-payments for personal care and homemaking services. For example, if you were living in Newfoundland you would have to spend about 12% of the overall cost, to a maximum of \$2,000, yourself. As I say, we have a generous program in the province of Ontario. In fact, the spending is the highest per capita.

If we take a look at Hamilton, recently we announced an additional \$92.5 million for community care services. Hamilton received approximately \$3.5 million. That was a 6.6% increase this year in the funding for the budget for the CCAC.

NURSING PROGRAMS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a question for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. The nursing profession in our province, and indeed across the country, is moving toward a system whereby all graduating nurses will have a four-year baccalaureate university-level degree. That's an initiative that certainly my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and our party support.

I was distressed to learn, however, in conversations with officials from the University of Windsor and St Clair College, that in fact as a result of these changes, next year—the first year of this program—we'll see a

22% reduction in the number of students admitted to our nursing programs at those particular institutions. Discussions with other community colleges and nursing faculties throughout the province have revealed similar concerns. Minister, I wonder if you could address this question and whether or not you think it's appropriate, in a time like this when we are faced with future nursing shortages, to cut the number of students we're admitting to all of our nursing faculties.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): The member is quite right in that we are negotiating these new collaborative programs and that we are planning for the year 2005 with regard to the new requirements. I will tell you that the number of graduates from our college and university nursing programs has actually increased substantially in recent years. This is just recently. This year we expect almost 2,000 nurses to graduate, and that's up from 1,750 last year, which is an increase of some 14%.

These are new programs that are taking some very careful discussions and the arrangements are different from colleges and universities. But I'm extremely optimistic that we'll have a plan that will meet not only the demands of his college and university, but others as well.

Mr Duncan: Minister, you and your colleague the Minister of Health are in receipt of correspondence from a number of faculties indicating that these discussions have broken down. This correspondence to you indicates that the biggest concern has to do with the first-year funding of this program and the colleges' concerns that they are moving out of other existing programs into this program. You're also aware that your government has made no commitment beyond the first year of this program on the funding question.

Officials from virtually every college and university that I've spoken to across Ontario indicate to me that your government's inability to make those kinds of commitments in a timely fashion threatens their ability to implement this program. I ask you today two things: (1) will you table in the House those letters that you have received; and (2) will you undertake that adequate funding will be in place to ensure that we have a sufficient growth in supply of nurses in this province to meet what all of us know are going to be increasing demands in the coming years?

1450

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I can assure the member opposite that we are doing our very best. I could go through the list, but I did it twice last week, and he can talk to me if he needs more clarification. We are working very hard, and I am feeling extremely optimistic that in just a short while we'll have the kind of collaborative agreement that we need.

As far as I know, most of the colleges and universities are onside. There are some that are having more difficulties than others, and we're working very hard to find solutions.

DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIAL IN SCHOOLS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Minister of Education. Recently, one of my constituents contacted me with his concerns about a pamphlet that was attached to his daughter's report card that came out of Thomas A. Stewart Secondary School in Peterborough. It was sent home with the students. The pamphlet, which I have, is entitled *Enough is Enough: Let Teachers Teach*, and was published for teachers by the OSSTF. It was sent home with the students for parents to read. It would appear that children are being used as pawns to push OSSTF propaganda.

Would you please advise whose responsibility it is to ensure that this type of pamphlet is not sent out with students' report cards in the future?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I have had many parents express concerns along these lines about politics in the classroom. As the Education Improvement Commission pointed out this week, the classroom is not the place for politics to be. It undermines the work of good teachers in terms of their ability to teach students to learn and get the outcomes that we want.

There are many opportunities for people within the education sector to express their political views, whatever they may be, without resorting to the classroom. The school board has the responsibility for approving and making decisions around what goes out, for example, with children's report cards. In this case, I understand that when we looked into it, it was one particular school. A person has taken responsibility for that judgment call and said it was inappropriate, as I understand, and was not something they should have done.

Mr Stewart: When I first received this and read it, I was completely disgusted with it. It's interesting to read the report given by the EIC yesterday, which says we should be creating a positive climate for learning in the classroom, and that means teaching the curriculum.

What can be done to ensure there is no future distribution of this type of pamphlet or any other form of politically biased literature that does not reflect anything to do with the curriculum? For too long our students have been surrounded by these negative, confrontational approaches within the school community, which lead to major conflict. Is there not a code of conduct?

Hon Mrs Ecker: There are rules and standards that boards have set for distribution of materials. If parents have concerns about something that has happened in a classroom that they think is inappropriate, they certainly should take that up with the principal and/or the school board to discuss it.

I understand there are differing views around many of the issues, but having that kind of political debate in a classroom is not appropriate.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Again, the honourable members across the way are hooting and hollering about this issue, but what is interesting is that where the federations and

the government work together, we have accomplished great things; for example, the implementation of the new curriculum and helping teachers to teach it better. The international tests are actually showing that it is having a positive impact on our students. We have resolved many issues. Unions and boards are resolving issues at the table as we speak.

We have other issues we need to continue to work to resolve. Extracurricular is one of them, and we—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Many of us have been trying to understand why your government would think that anyone would submit to a 60-hour workweek, giving up two weeks' annual vacation together, and possibly giving away overtime. Given that you stand behind the fact that this is all optional, that people can say no, it just keeps going through our minds, why would anyone agree to these things?

Then it occurred to us that maybe that's the explanation for your refusal to raise the minimum wage in five years, that it's your hope that if you can create a permanent pool of desperate workers, they can be counted on to submit to the pressures that employers will put on them and they would accept these working conditions, because other than that, why would anyone opt for these things?

My question to you is, is that why you refuse to increase the minimum wage? You want to create a pool of desperate workers who will do whatever it takes to keep a job to put food on the table?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I've never heard anything so crazy in my life. That's just absurd. When you give employees the opportunity to agree to work certain conditions, times of the week, to create their own flexible workweek, the member opposite suggests you're trying to create, through some capitalist conspiracy, a working poor which is so desperate somehow they would want to work longer hours for less money and not take holidays.

Do you know why you can't understand it? Because that's not what the bill says. It's quite simple. The bill doesn't say that. The bill says it's a standard 48-hour workweek. You get paid for overtime after 44 hours. If, and only if, the employee wants to create their own workweek, they can do that, with consent of the employer and the employee. Whatever else you said, whatever conspiracy is rolling around in your head, don't ask me to answer those questions.

Mr Christopherson: Let me tell you, the only thing that's crazy is this legislation when you say that it's somehow going to help workers. That's crazy.

Your new defence on this issue, every time you're asked about the 60-hour workweek or averaging overtime where workers lose, is always, "They can just say no," as if somehow the workplace is some big democracy where everybody gets an equal say. The reality is that if you

look at these options, a worker would have to be crazy to say, "Yes, go ahead, work me for 60 hours, please. Yes, please break up my vacation. I want it one day at a time. I don't want a week with my family. Oh yes, please make me work 12 days straight before I get off. That's what I really want. Please, have a new formula for my overtime so I don't get wages that I would otherwise get." That's what is crazy. Let me say to you, there is nothing crazy nor is there anything supportable about someone who makes \$6.85 an hour being leaned on by their employer to agree to those very things I just listed.

I submit to you again, Minister, because you still didn't address the issue of minimum wage, if that's not the reason why you won't increase the minimum wage—if it's not to create, as we think it is, a pool of desperate workers who will grasp at anything and any working conditions in order to keep a job to put food on the table—then why have you not seen fit in this bill to increase the minimum wage in Ontario when it's already been increased twice in the United States and they are looking at increasing it a third time?

Hon Mr Stockwell: It begs the response, the member for Hamilton West: if you were opposed to those kinds of agreements between employers and employees to extend their workweek, to change their vacation, to readjust their plans as to how they work one week to the next, why did you let your government do it? It begs that question. Why did you let your government do these things? Why did you let your government do all these horrific things that you're claiming are unfair to workers? Because 18,000 permits were issued under your government to allow exactly what you claim is a conspiracy theory to create a working poor underculture that would only work at the behest of some unfair employer. Why did you let that happen? I don't know, and I'm doing my best to fix it.

OPP FACILITY

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question today is to the Solicitor General. Your government talks a great deal about being fiscally responsible and about public safety and about the law-and-order agenda, yet the Ontario Provincial Police in eastern Ontario are using a 30-year-old radio system, ancient technology in today's society. That puts at risk their safety and the safety of all of the citizens in eastern Ontario. But there's no need for that. The OPP a year ago identified the ideal site for their new radio transmission centre. They have an existing building that, had it been acted on a year ago, would have been up and running today. There is no excuse for it not to be in service now, while they are looking and advertising for a new facility to be built in Perth, not where the OPP recommended.

Pork-barrelling is not common sense. Why are you not supporting the Ontario Provincial Police in their need for a modern radio system now?

1500

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): We are supporting the OPP to modernize the system. In fact, the restructuring of the OPP operations and services is

part of our goal to improve public safety through more efficient and more effective delivery of services.

The OPP started centralizing the communications centres in 1986 under the Liberals, where there were 57 sites reduced to 16. This process continued under the NDP and in fact this process is continuing now.

I might say to the member that he's talking about the site in eastern Ontario, but no decisions have been made on this at this point in time. He is certainly ahead of himself here. I assure you, though, that at the end of the day sites will be selected on the basis of best practices and best locations.

Mr Parsons: I understand no decision has been made in ridings that involve Liberal or NDP members; I do note it has been made in the three ridings that involve your members.

Let me read to you the process that the OPP have followed in their recommendation. This is from their document about the factors used to determine the number of OPP com centre locations. One of the points is "The opportunity to limit infrastructure costs associated with the new network." I would suggest a new \$1-million building in Perth does not limit it. Regarding locations of com centres, the OPP document states that they're being selected "to take advantage of existing resources." I would suggest a brand new, empty OPP building would be an existing resource compared to a building not yet constructed. Regarding implementation, the plan the OPP presented to you for it says that in the implementation they will require "renovation of existing government buildings." That implies to me that they want to use the existing building and not a brand new one.

This plan that they put forward was workable, was implementable a year ago, except the building is in the wrong riding.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I missed the question. Sorry, Speaker.

I don't profess to be the expert in terms of making these determinations, and certainly the member is making some sort of implication in terms of the process. I do assure you, though, that at the end of the day we will be looking for the best site based on best business practices.

I might say as well that there are a number of these locations across the province. As I was saying, this process has been going on since 1986. In an orderly way, we're going across the province doing these things. There are a number of other sites as well. Certainly there's a site in northwestern Ontario that hasn't been decided yet—either Thunder Bay or it could be Kenora-Rainy River. They are the two sites. I expect that maybe the member wants to give an opinion on that as well.

At the end of the day, we, the government, certainly are supporting best business practices and best decisions, and for the best efficiency for the OPP as well. That's the way the decision-making will be done.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr David Young (Willowdale): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. The

leader of the Liberal Party has made a lot of noise of late about the proposed drug treatment legislation, even going so far as to satirize it in what I think I could frankly call a fanciful and insulting bill that he brought forward in this assembly.

My question to you is, upon reflection and consideration of the comments from Mr McGuinty opposite, the leader of the official opposition, can you tell me what you think he is trying to accomplish?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): What's happening right now is that we're discovering the real facts. The fact is that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party don't support mandatory drug treatment for welfare recipients with a drug addiction. What we discovered in this process, when they brought up the issue of the Web sites, was that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party are taking their orders from the OPSEU union bosses. That's becoming very, very clear. It was in fact the OPSEU union bosses who made the initial discovery. Within an hour of the OPSEU bosses calling the tune, Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party were up playing to them.

This is not an issue which should be treated lightly. This is a group of people who obviously need our people. I saw on the Liberal Party's Web site that they've got a picture of a duck and a jar of urine. And they accuse this government of partisan uses of taxpayers' money? It's a real disgrace.

Mr Young: I thank the minister for his response. I do indeed. I also noted that some of the heckling from the Liberal Party included that of the member from Hamilton East, who is not in his seat at the present time, who asked the minister to reference a Web site, so I certainly appreciate the minister's answer, in which he did just that. I understand that the Liberal Party has asked the Speaker to investigate a news release on a ministry Web site. I ask the minister what he can tell us today about what he believes the proper use of Web sites should be.

Hon Mr Baird: I wanted to check out the taxpayer-funded Web site of the Liberal Party, so I got a letter from Dalton McGuinty, equipped with the Legislative seal, "leader of the official opposition," and the Web site address is right on the back. So I logged on to the Liberal Party's Web site, advertised by taxpayers' dollars. What do these taxpayers' dollars—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. OK. Back at it.

Hon Mr Baird: This Web site was advertised under the "Leader of the Opposition" on the member's Legislative Assembly letterhead. You click on it, and there are a number of interesting things. One says, "Donate Online" to the Liberal Party. They're using taxpayers' dollars to promote political donations to the Liberal Party. You can click on another section, "Get involved. Donate now." Advertised by taxpayers' money. But

that's not it. They're all in on it. You can even donate money to Sandra Pupatello and—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. The minister's time was up.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm wondering if this is appropriately addressed through you, because it's about legislative services. We heard a reference to the Ontario Liberal Party Web site. I wonder if we could get a super across the replay of this. It would say "Ontarioliberal-party.com," where you can help—

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Point of order, the Minister of Community and Social Services. I'll let you know I'll be very quick. It had better be good or it'll be right up.

The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Oh, I'm sorry. I apologize to the member for York Centre. I wondered why he kept getting up. My mistake. I apologize.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. You issued a trade strategy on December 1, 2000. One of the key components of your strategy is to encourage and increase the number of small- and medium-sized Ontario businesses with export potential to engage in exports, since only 15% of these companies are currently engaged in international trade. If 85% of these companies are presently not engaged in international trade, surely the easiest and most productive market and opportunity for them is the USA, which accounts for 93.5% of our international trade. The US is the largest market in the world, it speaks the same language, has the same culture and is located right next door.

Another component of your trade strategy is to reduce Ontario's over-dependency on the US by establishing trade representatives in the USA, the UK, Germany, Japan and China. I'm pleased you're going to be restoring representation in these jurisdictions, but do you not agree that you should, as a priority, also be establishing representatives in such cities as New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, Los Angeles and Boston?

1510

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I want to thank the honourable member for the question. It's worth possibly sharing some information with the Legislature because the points the honourable member has raised are very valid. I think the province of Ontario should be a little more prominent in establishing a presence in some of those areas the honourable member has mentioned.

We have intentions of making sure we don't take our neighbours south of the border for granted. I like to refer

to them as a good fleet customer so you don't take them for granted. You have to make sure you service that customer but also take a look at other markets as well. I take the member's advice and I can assure the member that the province will establish a presence in various parts of the world to make sure Ontario will continue to thrive.

Mr Kwinter: There's an old saying that the place to go hunting is where the ducks are. If in the United States we have this huge market, here is an excellent opportunity for us to get these companies, the 85% of the companies that aren't engaged in international trade even though they have the capability, to learn how to trade. I don't know if they've told you this at the ministry, but when I was there they used to say, "You get your BA in trade in the United States, your MA in Europe and your PhD in the Far East." I'm suggesting to you that if you get exporters in Ontario doing business in the United States first, then they get the feel for what it's like. They know how they do it and then they can expand into these other markets where I think there is long-term potential. I think it's great, but I think there should be a real emphasis on getting these 85% of companies that can trade but aren't active in the export business. I'd like your comments on that.

Hon Mr Palladini: Again the honourable member has made an excellent point. I'm surprised he might not have the information that I'm going to share with everybody here in the Legislature. About a little over three and a half years ago, we actually embarked on a mission to make sure that small and medium-sized businesses knew what to do if they were interested in getting into exports. Our people at the ministry have certainly engaged with small and medium-sized businesses that have expressed that interest in getting into the export market. We've also gone to the tune of establishing trade days within various parts of the province and working with municipalities to make sure they are aware that we have very important information that we can pass on in working with municipalities and the businesses in those municipalities to address who is interested in getting into the export market.

But those are very good points. I can assure you we have great people with tremendous information at the ministry and we're going to continue to utilize—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): While I'm very intrigued and would love to pursue the Liberal Party abuse of taxpayers' dollars further, I have another, more pressing question for the Minister of Transportation.

Minister, very tragically, about a month ago in my riding, two 13-year-old boys were struck down and killed by a drunk driver. It strikes me that as I read the newspapers and watch TV today, the incidences of people being struck down and killed by drunk drivers seem to be growing in Ontario. I wonder if you could update the Legislature on these types of tragedies.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation):

The issue the member for Niagara Falls raises is tremendously important. I want you to consider the fact that accidents caused through drunk driving are the leading criminal cause of death in Canada today. It's a blight on our society. That's why our government has taken very tough action on this important file.

I'm pleased to report to the House that as a result of action that our government has taken between 1995 and 1999, drinking-driving fatalities have decreased by 36.6%. That being said, we can and we must do more because this is a blight on society. As we move toward the holiday season, I would encourage everybody who hears this and all of my colleagues around the House that when people are having parties, find out who the designated driver is and make sure they're only served soft drinks, offer them accommodation if somebody you think might be driving has been drinking, and suggest taxis.

Mr Maves: Thank you, Minister. Those numbers surprised me a little bit, but I'm glad to see and it's somewhat encouraging that there actually is a downward trend in the province of Ontario.

You talked about tough new measures that this government has adopted to combat drunk driving. I wonder if you could inform the people of Ontario what some of those measures have been?

Hon Mr Turnbull: Yes, we have moved on several fronts. We've increased suspension periods for repeat offenders from two years to three years for a second offence and to a lifetime suspension for a third offence. We've introduced the vehicle impoundment program for those driving while suspended due to Criminal Code driving convictions. We have introduced administrative driver's licence suspensions. Over 63,000 people have lost their licences for 90 days since the program was implemented in 1996, and we work with our partners in OCCID and MADD and the various police departments. We have dedicated multi-year RIDE funding of \$1.2 million annually.

I thank my colleague for the question.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Oral questions are now over. The member for Windsor West on a point of privilege.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): For my point of personal privilege, I would ask the Speaker to investigate what I believe to be a serious matter. This afternoon at 1 o'clock my office was called to participate in a briefing on the bill that the Minister of Health tabled in the House today. The briefing time was to go between 1 o'clock and 1:30. We had suggested at the time of its booking that that wasn't enough time. We had wished that it had been sooner, in fact on a different day, not on the same day so that we would be going from the briefing into the House at 1:30 for question period and to see the tabling of the bill.

We arrived at our place of meeting at 1 o'clock and no one was there. We sat in the meeting room waiting for our briefing until 1:20. Some bureaucrat staff had arrived about 1:15, but the political staff from the minister's office hadn't arrived. They arrived about 1:20. They refused to give us a copy of the bill, so as we were to have the last 10 minutes to have any discussion about the content of the bill, we couldn't look at a bill. The bureaucrats proceeded, in the 10 minutes we had, to try to explain to us something we couldn't even see written because we couldn't see the bill.

I don't know if this is standard procedure in terms of briefings, but what caused me great concern was that in these 10 minutes we had, at 1:20 this afternoon, we learned that the ministry had already given full copies of and access to the bill, with a full briefing, to the Ontario Medical Association, to the Ontario Hospital Association and to "several other groups" who were in a lock-up several hours ago. All morning they were accessing information that I, as a member of this House and a critic for the health area, could not access at 1:20.

Mr Speaker, I would ask you, since they had set the briefing time so that we would have gone directly from the briefing into the House, that you could have said it was indeed a lock-up; that we could hardly have had available time to spread the news across to the public when the minister's intent was to advance the bill in the House herself at that very same time.

I ask the Speaker, as a member of the House, what privileges do I have; that at a minimum, I would have had the same level of access to a bill that was to be tabled in the House today that members of the Ontario Medical Association had, that the Ontario Hospital Association had? Considering its content, I have to question why they would have tried so hard to keep information away from us.

I'm very concerned about the precedent it has set. There has been a precedent that the critic responsible for those areas can at least see the contents of the bill before it's tabled in the House so that we too may prepare in terms of our response. That was denied to me today, and I would seriously ask the Speaker to consider whether in fact I have lost privileges today.

1520

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As you know, there are no written rules in the standing orders about sharing this information with critics and the policy varies from ministry to ministry. As you also know, there are very strict rules around ministers about the sharing of information. We're certainly prepared to look into the circumstances in this case, whether it was something untoward or whether an inadvertent mistake was made. As you know, the policy varies from ministry to ministry, depending on the timing and the issues.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On the same point, Mr Speaker: I appreciate the words of the Minister of Education. I rise to underscore the fact that, first of all, it's not just the one opposition party; it affects

both parties on this side of the House. But it's not the first time. The minister in her comments said there are different, varying policies. It makes it extremely difficult when there is short notice. Even if the briefing is called a little earlier, say at noon, getting a call at 11 or 11:30 that the briefing is at noon makes it equally difficult for the members to attend, especially when they are expected to stand, to rise, and offer some intelligent comments on the issue.

Could Minister Palladini not leave the House, please. Al, I need to talk to you before you go. I'm sorry, I couldn't afford to lose him. It's an important local issue.

I want to underscore the fact that we have the same problem in this caucus and that we have had it with other ministries. Again there is a trend of less information, shortened time, and in this instance, where others are being briefed ahead of time, there must be some issue of privilege here that you could potentially address.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I've listened to the point made by the member for Windsor West and I was also paying attention to the other comments, particularly by the Minister of Education. I'm sure the Minister of Education is right that there is no provision in our standing orders for briefings. I'm sure the Clerk will agree with me on that, right, Claude? I don't believe there is. It's nowhere written. But there is a long-standing practice that from time to time, and not always on every bill or every measure, governments of varying stripes will extend a briefing opportunity, not just to members of the Legislature but to affected stakeholders in the community.

I think the member from Windsor makes a very good point, and we need to know what happened here. I say something that I have been saying in recent weeks. I want all members to think about the way we are treating one another and the way we expect to be treated. I have been there and I understand that on a number of bills there would be every reason for members of the Legislature to ask for and get a technical briefing on a government bill. Quite frankly, if that is asked for, in my view, unless it's a tax bill where the release of that information might cause some difficulty to the finance department and to a variety of other issues that we could all imagine, it ought to be granted.

It is, to my way of thinking, utterly intolerable that ministers of the crown of whatever stripe in whatever government would be taking material out into the community to brief others, while not at the same time offering in a fair and generous way that equal opportunity at least at the same time, if not before, to members of the Legislature who might have an interest in receiving such a briefing.

In this case, it may have been inadvertent, it might have been accidental; I don't know. But I say again that if we have any concept of self-respect and any hope for the institutional integrity of this place, surely we could all agree that if a briefing is asked for by members of the Legislature, it should almost always be granted, and it

should be granted to members before, or not later than, it is offered to people in the general community.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to ensure that we keep this issue in context. The member's main concern, as I understand it, unless I've missed the thrust of her point, was that she was refused the copy of the bill following the briefing. I understand that the ministry was prepared to provide the briefing. There may well have been a problem with timing, but that is something that has to be arranged between the member and the staff.

The issue of not receiving a bill is one we face appropriately. The bill had not yet been introduced. It would have been inappropriate for that bill to be released to the member. We, as caucus members, do not receive a bill. We often, as caucus, receive briefings where we're not allowed to take with us copies of the bill for that same reason.

So I submit to you, Speaker, that the whole issue of briefings is a privilege; it is not something the ministry is obligated to do. I agree with the member who previously spoke that obviously it's important for members to know what is happening, what is coming down from various ministries, and it's appropriate for the briefings to take place, but I really believe that the member's concern in this particular instance is unfounded.

The Speaker: I thank all the members. I think there is going to be a little bit of clarification. The whip maybe missed the point. Go ahead, member for Windsor West.

Mrs Papatello: Just to be clear for your own deliberations: no, we did not get a copy of the bill. That may or may not be a point, that I would deserve to get a bill at that time, given that within nine or 10 minutes it was going to be placed on the table. The truth of the matter is that these groups outside this House, not elected members, had access for hours to look at the bill, to leaf through the bill, to have full briefing access of all the technicalities by the bureaucrats, not just by the political staff but by the bureaucrats involved, those who were writing this bill.

This was the kind of information I would have expected to receive during the briefing. Whether or not I actually keep a copy of the bill in walking from the second-floor hallway into the House I imagine is a separate point, but that I, as a member who's elected to come to this House, in my critic responsibilities wouldn't have had the same access that outside groups would have had for a long time I think is untenable. It's not acceptable to me.

I hope that in his deliberation the Speaker will find that I would deserve, at minimum, as my colleague from Renfrew puts it, equal opportunity as the Ontario Medical Association and the Ontario Hospital Association. I think that's reasonable; in fact, perhaps I should have had more.

The Speaker: I thank the members for their input.

Hon Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes, very briefly. We're almost done here. The chief government whip.

Hon Mr Klees: Speaker, I appreciate that clarification. If in fact the staff were late for the briefing, we apologize. That is something that has happened and we regret that. There is an opportunity for a fuller briefing once the bill has been introduced and that will take place. I trust the member understands that these things happen. It shouldn't happen, it did, and we regret that.

The Speaker: I thank the members for their input. As the senior statesman in the House points out, it is not a violation of privilege in the circumstances when the government fails to invite a member to a briefing or event. I therefore find that the situation described by the member does not fall into the category that a *prima facie* case of privilege has been made out.

I would, however, encourage all ministers of the crown, as the senior statesman of the House said, to ensure that members on both sides are briefed in a timely and pending fashion. I take the words of the Minister of Education, who is trying to be helpful in highlighting some of the circumstances, as well as the chief government whip. I know we all treat each other with respect. While the rules might not be there, as a member who's been in this House for 10 years and sat on the other side in opposition, I know I've sat in on briefings like that and I hope that tradition would continue so there would be some element of trust between both sides.

I appreciate all the comments. There is not any violation of the rules, but I hope we'll take back the message of the chief government whip and the Minister of Education so the briefings can take place.

When we get down to specifics, as the member for Windsor West said, about whether or not the bill can come in, certainly the process of having technical briefings has been a courtesy that's been extended, and hopefully that tradition will continue. As a result of this point of privilege, hopefully the ministers of the crown will in the next little while be able to follow some of the recommendations we had here.

I thank the member for bringing that up.

1530

PETITIONS

STUDDED TIRES

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Lisa Clements of Toronto has done a tremendous amount of work on the issue of studded tires in Ontario, and I am pleased to present this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To rescind the law banning studded tires in Ontario."

Because of Lisa's great interest in these studs, I am pleased to affix my signature to the petition.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas children are exposed to sexually explicit material in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation which will:

"Create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to sexually explicit material in retail establishments;

"Make it illegal to sell, rent, or loan sexually explicit materials to minors."

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

OPP FACILITY

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to locate the eastern regional OPP dispatch centre in the vacant and relatively new OPP building on Wallbridge Loyalist Road in Belleville, Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To locate the eastern regional OPP dispatch centre in Belleville, Ontario."

I will sign my name to this petition and I will deliver it to the table through Tim.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been signed by a number of residents from North Bay regarding this government's ongoing discrimination against cancer patients. It reads as follows:

"Given that the northern Ontario travel grant"—actually, Speaker, just one second because it's all in French and I'm trying to find the English one. I could do it in French but it would probably take me longer. I apologize to members of the House.

"Whereas the northern Ontario health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to

health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province; and

"Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Loughheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

This is signed by a number of residents of North Bay, Ontario, the Premier's riding. I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further petitions? The member for Durham.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I thought for a moment you were going to ignore me. I'm getting literally thousands of these newspaper petitions that have been mailed to me. It's incredible. I personally want to thank Dave Lumsden from Ancaster, Ontario, who has a 1964 Buick Skylark, and others, all of whom are enthusiasts.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole"—that's me, actually—"and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull," on the other hand, "as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation," and to this moment he hasn't—I'm just adding some of this;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act," to allow vintage auto enthusiasts to register their vehicles using year of manufacturing plates.

I'm pleased to present these petitions to the page, who is Aaron from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and he will carry them to the table. Thank you, Mr Speaker, for that indulgence.

WATER EXTRACTION

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we strenuously object to permits to take water being issued by the Ministry of the Environment without adequate assessment of the consequences and without adequate consultation with the public and those people and groups who have expertise and interest;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We request a moratorium on the issuing of permits to take water for non-farm, commercial and industrial use and the rescinding of all existing commercial water taking permits that are for bulk or bottled water export, outside of Ontario, until a comprehensive evaluation of our water needs is completed. An independent non-partisan body should undertake this evaluation."

The people in my riding have brought this to me to bring to the floor. I congratulate them for their initiative and I proudly sign my name to their petition.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I have a similar petition. There must be quite a need for this thing; that's why these keep coming.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole," my good colleague from Durham, "and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to be used on vintage automobiles."

I agree. I'm going to pass this on to page Tim and he's going to bring it to the clerks.

WATER EXTRACTION

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there was no environmental impact study done for this permit;

"Whereas both wells for Stirling's municipal water supply and Stirling's sewage lagoon depend on water levels downstream;

"Whereas there are peregrine falcons in the area; and

"Whereas no water has yet been taken in the three years since the permit was granted;

"We, the undersigned, request that permit to take water number 96-P-4110 for lot 11, concession 7, Huntington ward, municipality of Centre Hastings, be rescinded."

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Hopefully this isn't indulgent, but we're reading this petition a number of times out of respect for the people who have sent it to us; for instance, Ross and Lynn Pratt from Kincardine.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates"—what a shame—"and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull"—that's another story—"as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation"—and I think he will, actually.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act" to allow vintage auto enthusiasts to use the year of manufacture plates."

I might say that Bill 99 will be debated, I believe, a week from today. I'll give this to Adam from London North Centre.

1540

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 6, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 147, An Act to revise the law related to employment standards / Projet de loi 147, Loi portant révision du droit relatif aux normes d'emploi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): We'll move to the Liberal caucus. When we last ended, the member for Lambton spoke, and if he were here we would do the two-minute questions and comments. But since he's not, we're going to move on in the debate and we're going to the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I'm here to engage in the debate on the amendments to the Employment Standards Act, Bill 147. It's ironic that we're talking about this bill today. I see that the profit of the CIBC, one of the banks, doubled this year to \$2.1 billion

net. Yesterday the Bank of Nova Scotia's net profit was \$2 billion. It's ironic that we're here trying to ensure that employees somehow shouldn't share in this huge windfall we're seeing for our banks. I know that we should be very happy to see our banks making these huge profits, and that's dandy, but I think ordinary Ontarians should also be sharing in the wonderful success that the booming economy in the States is reaping in Ontario.

I hope this government sees that unless you share the wealth eventually we all suffer. That's the basic philosophy of the Liberal Party, to ensure that as well as the private sector doing well and employers like the banks doing well, we want to ensure that the ordinary workers do well too. That is something most Ontarians would agree with. They believe in fairness and sharing.

The bill before us today is part of this incremental attempt by this government to water down a lot of the protective pieces of legislation that have been built up in this province over decades to ensure that workers have certain rights. I notice there's an article here that I picked up from the London Free Press. It talks about this bill being "A Return to 19th-Century Labour Laws." This article, if I may quote from it, says:

"Heads up! Premier Mike Harris's government is about to gut already mediocre employee protections in the Employment Standards Act. It is doing so in the guise of modernizing the law to meet the needs of flexible workplaces.

"What is really happening is the trashing of what took workers more than a century of struggle to achieve. The planned changes are all about providing employers with the power to schedule employees to work matching peak production and service times and decreasing labour costs.

"The Employment Standards Work Group, a self-described network of more than 30 community legal clinics, community centres and organizations which work with non-unionized workers in Toronto, has produced a critique of the government's"—

Some of the points, and I hope the public will bear with me, in terms of the impact of this legislation: as you know, sometimes it takes a while for everybody to understand the impact of the legislation before us. I should put on the record some of the highlights of this Bill 147.

"Increase the maximum workweek from 48 hours to 60 hours. Although the government has said an employee could legally refuse to work more than 48 hours a week, given the imbalance of power in the employee/employer relationship, this will not be a real choice."

I agree with that. There are some good employers who will obviously not coerce or intimidate employees into working 60 hours, but in many cases employees—especially, there are a lot of employees in my own constituency of Eglinton-Lawrence who are very eager to work. Some of them have two or three jobs. Some of them are driving for courier companies. They deliver food. They work in variety stores. Then they clean offices in the early hours of the morning. People are more than willing to work and, in many cases, because of wages not exactly being

lucrative for them, they're willing to work two or three jobs. Those are the workers I am concerned about.

When the government puts forward this so-called option of 60 hours, many of them will be afraid to turn down that offer of 60 hours. That has been my experience, because right now those same workers, as I said, are desperately seeking any kind of employment and will work two or three jobs. Mr Speaker, I don't know if you're aware of this in Sault Ste Marie, but in Toronto with some of these employees there are sometimes two or three families basically living in a one-bedroom apartment.

That is how desperate their need for work is. They have to live maybe six to eight people in a one-bedroom apartment. That's what's happening in the city of Toronto right now. People are desperately looking for work because the price of housing is so high. Look at the price of cauliflower. You have to pay five or six bucks for a head of cauliflower this week in Toronto. The price of food is going up. The price of natural gas, the average price of heating your home, is going to go up \$550. You try and fill up your car in Toronto and you almost have to take out a mortgage.

These are average Ontario residents. They are meeting these pressures on a daily basis. They are confronted with a situation where their employer is saying, "You can choose to work the 60 hours. Employee B has already chosen to work 60 hours. Why are you not making that same choice?" That's why I think the 60-hour option that this government has included in this legislation is something that they hope this government will retract. I know they rarely make amendments and rarely listen to advice, but I think most people who are either in opposition or objective are saying that the 60-hour proviso is not a good one to have in the legislation.

Another critique is, "Hours worked would be averaged over three weeks so the maximum is, in effect, 180 hours in three weeks. An employee could legally be required to work 40 hours in the first week, 45 hours the second and 95 hours the third week. It's hard to imagine how families will juggle scheduling, especially if they have young kids."

If you talk to people who work and live in crisis areas of our province, you will see that one of the direct causes of problems, with adolescents especially, is that the parents don't have the time to be at home with their young children. In most cases the two parents are working. Again you can imagine that some parents are working two or three jobs, so in this case, if in the third week of this option you have someone working 95 hours in one week, how could you dare gamble leaving your kids basically on their own for that week? That's what you'll be doing.

It's not good for the workers. It's not the top echelon workers I'm concerned about so much because I think they generally get paid more and they have more protections. They can read and write English very well. I'm talking about people who are marginalized in the workforce. They are going to suffer and their kids are

going to suffer, because I don't know who could afford any energy to come home and cook and clean and sit down with their kids and do their homework when they're working 95 hours in a week, or 60 hours. With these pressures, there is really no energy left to devote to your kids.

1550

Another interesting proposal in this legislation: "Currently, many workers receive overtime pay after 44 hours' work in one week. Averaged over three weeks, it would only be payable if you worked 132 hours. This means if you worked 35 hours then 65 hours and 35 hours, which equals 130 hours, you would not get overtime for the middle week." Again, it's another wrinkle that I think is on the side of the employer and doesn't help that marginalized worker.

"An employer will be able to 'request' you take time off rather than be paid overtime. How can a non-unionized worker refuse?" We certainly know in the 1940s and 1950s that this was a common practice, and it was a way of really diluting the rights of the worker, and many workers were forced into that situation where they weren't really paid for the overtime, but instead were intimidated into taking the time off. I certainly agree with the thrust of this article in the London Free Press that says that this type of legislation is edging us back into pre-war types of protections for employees.

"The One Day's Rest in Seven Act will be repealed and replaced with a provision that employers provide two days off every 14 days, which means an employee could be forced to work 12 days straight without a day off. Working such a stretch has health and safety consequences." Working 12 straight days is one of the possibilities that arises as a result of this legislation. It can cause all kinds of stresses on that worker.

"Employers will be able to 'encourage' employees to take their vacation time one day at a time rather than in one-week periods." Again, I think this is very anti-family in that in some of the unscrupulous workplaces when the day is slow and there's not much business, they will say you take this day off rather than taking a full week off, whereby you can get together with your family and take a real rest. This type of legislation basically says you don't need that combined week off. You just take that one day here, one day there. Again, it's obvious that it gives more leverage to the employer, less family time to the employee. As I said, that is not good for workers in Ontario who want to work, who are desperate to work and will work no matter how low the wage is.

"There will be no requirement that an employer provide one day off when an employee works on a public holiday." That's another change.

"Historically, labour standards were enacted because of the unequal bargaining power in the employee-employer relationship." That's why you need protections for workers because, generally speaking, the individual worker has very little power against an employer who generally has more availability of information, and certainly experience, so that a worker entering the workforce needs some protection.

"Without minimum standards, history shows that employers tend to 'mine' their employees, with serious social and health impacts." That's a danger that lurks there. There is more impact on their health, and their social health, also.

"At its most extreme, employees are literally worked to death, as was the case in Victorian England prior to labour uprisings." I'm not saying we're going back to the days of Charles Dickens, but I'm saying there is a creeping regression here that we've seen with this government and its attempt to dismantle decades of labour peace and labour co-operation in this province.

"When you look at labour standards in Europe, you quickly realize we Ontarians are living in the modern equivalent of a slave state." I don't agree that we're in a slave state, but in comparison to where Europe is going, I think we are going in the opposite direction.

"In Germany, workers receive a minimum six weeks' annual paid vacation and 10 paid holidays. In the UK, they receive five weeks' paid vacation and eight paid holidays.

"What do we get? A minimum two weeks' paid vacation and eight days' paid holidays, less than half the European average."

The Europeans are not suffering. Considering the lack of resources that a small country like Italy has or a smaller country like Belgium, they are able to provide good education, good health care and good housing for most of the citizens. Ontario is much wealthier in resources. We should be more than able to give workers a break. With this legislation, as I said, we're regressing.

"Statistics Canada has referred to the time stress is on the increase for every age group, more than three million Canadians described themselves as workaholics and more than half of the 25-to-44 age group worry they don't spend enough time with friends and family." I know this government doesn't put that much value in that and says this is not part of the bottom line, but I think a healthy family and a healthy community is very valuable to this province. It's very valuable to the city of Toronto. It's very valuable to every community.

I don't think this legislation has been measured against that benchmark. It has been done, I'm sure, by Bay Street lawyers who really have little regard for the social impact or the family impact of this legislation. I would like to see if they've consulted people who deal with families under stress and the impact of this type of legislation. Certainly you'll find that a lot of people who deal with families that have to make both ends meet—take care of kids, hold down two or three jobs, pay rents which are going through the roof or pay mortgages or pay property taxes—think this is not going to help. It's not going to do anything to relieve that stress and that pressure point, which causes all kinds of health problems and all kinds of social disruptions, not only in our communities, but in our schools and throughout Ontario.

But again, this government has not quantified that. I don't think that's their priority or their interest, and this legislation demonstrates that is not their priority or

interest. I think working families are in many ways the forgotten element in this province, because they're the ones who are quiet. They are the silent majority, the ones who pay their taxes and take care of their kids. They do their chores around the house. They volunteer at the local arena. They are the ones you'll see going door-to-door for the cancer society. They are the ones that are taken for granted because they are too busy to complain. They can't afford lobbyists, which you have to hire to talk to this government. You just cannot be heard if you're one of those average Ontarians who belongs to one of these working families. They don't get listened to and are very, very often forgotten.

This bill, without a doubt, is an attack on working families that are stressed out, in many cases underpaid and in many cases cannot deal with the stresses of work and the stresses of taking care of children, not to mention the interpersonal relationships with families and friends.

"Increasing work hours exacerbates economic inequalities by allowing overtime hours to be concentrated among certain groups of workers. This means less hiring—less sharing of the work. Women, who are pressured to agree to longer working days or weeks, will find it even harder to have and raise children." I see them in the morning. It's still dark in the morning and you'll see, in general cases, mothers carrying one or two young toddlers under their arms, trying to catch the St Clair streetcar to get to a daycare before they go off to work. That mother then has to spend all day working, and in this case her hours of work may be extended. Then she has to come home again on the streetcar, pick up her children at the daycare or at the babysitter's and bring them back home. By the time she gets home, that mother has been out on the road working and transporting her kids for maybe 14 or 16 hours. This bill does nothing to help that mother of those kids. But that is a common sight.

Many of these people cannot even afford a car. We assume that everything is like peachy-keen suburbia. There are many inner-city-type conditions all over Ontario where mothers especially are forced to deal with the reality of making a living and taking care of their kids at the same time, unable to get to work—they don't drive, they don't have anybody to drive them—and then they work hard at their jobs. This bill cares very little for them. In fact, it's going to make it much harder.

1600

We need progressive labour standards that promote quality of life, that are applied to all workplaces and enforced to protect workers and ensure a level playing field for all employees. Unfortunately, Premier Mike Harris has a different vision. It's true, they have the right to have that vision, but it's a different vision of this province. I would think it's no different than the vision of Canada that Stockwell Day had. It's a different vision, and the people of Canada rejected that vision.

Hopefully we in Ontario will stand up for ordinary Ontarians, working families, who have a vision that includes families and kids. They may not be able to speak

perfect English or they may not be able to e-mail the Premier or hire a lobbyist, but they have every right to be heard. Hopefully we, as legislators, can speak up on their behalf and tell the Premier of this province that these people are not part of the boom we see on the front pages of the Financial Post, where we see the CIBC profit doubling to \$2.1 billion. God love the CIBC, we love our banks, but I think we should have a little bit of love left over for those children who are on the St Clair streetcar at 6:30, 7 o'clock in the morning with their mothers taking them to daycare centres so the mother can go and work in some factory making 7 bucks an hour. Those people need a little bit of love, they need a bit of care, just as much as the CIBC or the Bank of Nova Scotia and all these wonderful big companies and wonderful big corporations.

Let's share some of our love as legislators, some of our caring, with ordinary Ontarians, who also pay taxes, probably proportionately more than some of these big outfits do. So that's my message. This bill doesn't help families and in fact hurts a lot of vulnerable families who don't have people to speak up for them.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have but two minutes. Look, I'm old enough to remember down where I come from in Crowland and Welland and Thorold, across the Niagara region, when working people, people like my parents, fought for a 40-hour workweek. They fought hard and they fought with great commitment and they fought not so much for themselves as for their children and grandchildren. They fought for families.

I spent some time with the self-proclaimed leader of the family values caucus of the Conservative Party last night, and I tried to explain to him that, yes, our whole NDP caucus is a family values caucus. That's why we're fighting for an increase to the minimum wage. That's why we're fighting to maintain a 40-hour workweek. That's why we're fighting to ensure that families earn decent salaries and have decent, affordable housing. That's why we're fighting for daycare and other pre-school programs. That's why we're fighting for an economy where instead of people working at McJobs or jobettes, so that both parents have to work, one parent can work and one parent has the freedom to choose to remain home, whether it's the father or the mother, to help raise those kids.

In but two minutes, speaking to this bill on behalf of our caucus this afternoon is going to be Rosario Marchese, the member for Trinity-Spadina. Rosario Marchese and the New Democrats are going to fight this government on their effort to impose a 60-hour workweek, a rollback to the Dirty Thirties.

Just as we opposed the greed of this government; just as Rosario Marchese stood up and said no when this government with its greed wanted a 42%, a 32%, oh, let's split the difference, a 17% salary increase for themselves; just like Rosario Marchese and the New Democrats said no to that, Rosario Marchese and the New Democrats say no to a 60-hour workweek, Rosario Marchese and the

New Democrats say no to these prolonged and continued attacks on families, on family values and on the working women and men of this province.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I wanted to take this opportunity to say that I'm extremely proud of this legislation which our government has brought to this place under the esteemed leadership of my colleague, the Minister of Labour, Chris Stockwell.

I am particularly, of course, as minister responsible for children, very grateful that we have included in this bill the extension of the parental and maternity leaves and the 10-day family crisis leave. This is an area that I believe has long been needed to help families give their youngest children the best start in life. Obviously, everything that our government is doing in terms of the early years program is making that start in life the priority.

Ontario's Promise, which under the leadership of Premier Harris was announced on November 3, further emphasizes the priority and the commitment that our government is making to children and youth in this province. The maternity and parental leave extensions will give families the option of choosing, while their job is protected in terms of their return to the workplace, to be at home with those young children. We now know that that early nurturing and care for those young children is paramount to the future behaviour, health and success in their adult life of these precious, important young children.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I would certainly like to commend my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence. I thought he made some very salient points about this legislation, and he presented some very moving images in terms of the people who will be affected when this legislation might become law.

I appreciate it has been presented by members of the government that the 60-hour workweek component is a voluntary one and that the employee would have to first consent to a 60-hour workweek. But I've talked to people in my riding, and they have presented this scenario to me: someone, usually someone who would be looking for a job in a service industry, someone who would be making minimum wage perhaps, is asked at the time of their employment interview, "Would you have any problems working a 60-hour workweek?" This is someone who needs a job, is looking for work. It might be the corner store just down the street. It's convenient, it means that they don't have to go as far to work, they're close to their home, if their family needs them they're nearby. They are asked by their prospective employer, "Are you open to working a 60-hour workweek?" This person really wants the job. Do they feel they're in a position where they can say, "No, that really wouldn't work in my situation"? How comfortable do you think they will feel when they leave that job interview knowing that conceivably there will be others interviewed who may be in a position to work a 60-hour workweek? So while they probably don't want to work it, they will feel they would be forced to say yes.

I would suggest that's a scenario that is a very real one and makes the voluntary perspective or the voluntary presentation of this legislation not a realistic one.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It's a pleasure to take part in the two-minute hit. The member for Eglinton-Lawrence certainly talked about some emotional issues, emotional in the sense of the price of cauliflower going up every winter. I don't think that has anything to do with the Employment Standards Act, the revisions we are doing, the 60-hour workweek or the permits that different governments have had to issue in order to be flexible.

He talked about banks making money and businesses in Ontario making money. I want to be on the record to say that making a profit, making money in Ontario is not a crime. We want to make sure that companies are profitable, that they are able to set up shop, and we want to encourage them to stay here. We want to encourage the environment for businesses to set up shop here and to stay here.

1610

I certainly want to commend the minister for children for highlighting the Ontario initiative so eloquently. Our Premier, along with General Colin Powell, who happened to be there as well, unveiled that. This initiative is the best thing we could do for the children of Ontario. I happened to have a few moments to discuss a few of the business issues with my wife last night and she was also saying that the initial six years are the best years in a child's life. We want to ensure as a government, in the policies we make, that we pay attention to those six years and that parents have the ability to stay as long as one year, the first year, in the bringing up of their children.

Mr Colle: I appreciate the comments of the members from both sides, especially the comments of my colleagues from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Mississauga South, Niagara Centre and Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. I think it has a lot to do with the price of cauliflower. Ordinary people have a hard time paying for extremely high gasoline prices, the price of natural gas that heats your home, the price of groceries, the price of rent. I don't know if the member ever finds out what it costs to shop in this city any more, what it costs to pay rent, what it costs to fill up a car, and now the price of heating your home is going to go up through the roof. He says, "Well, it's wonderful." I don't think everything is wonderful.

There are some things in this province that are wonderful, but what I'm trying to say is that this legislation does not help hard-working people who are struggling. It is very clever by half to include some of the measures we've been advocating about parental leave and the 10-day emergency leave, but then what it does with the backhand is basically decimate a lot of working families through the back door. They know they're doing this. They know they're pleasing just one segment of Ontario by doing this. I'm saying share the wealth.

They should be ashamed of themselves. In this time of plenty, when there's a budget surplus in the billions, they

can't even put money into schools and hospitals, and they're in chaos. Either they are poor managers, incompetent, or they want to destroy public health care or public education or good labour legislation in this province. What is it? Are you incompetent or are you out to destroy good people in Ontario? Which one is it? That's my question to the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. Which one is it: destruction or incompetence?

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I stand proudly in opposition to Bill 147, as all of our members do, and there are many good reasons for it. But before I get to my comments, it's interesting to have the minister for children stand up proudly saying what a great bill this is. While there are some elements of this bill which I will touch on that are very good, in fact, because we were promoting it—Shelley Martel was urging the minister to deal with one part of this issue that they had refused to deal with. That's a good part of this bill. But there are other elements of this bill I will be talking about, and I will make reference to some articles that will speak to the dangers of what this government is about to engage in. That you should have the minister for children stand up saying what a great thing this is, I don't get it. To know that this concerned caucus has a family values caucus, of which I think there are about 10 of them in it—

Mr Kormos: We're not sure. They won't identify themselves.

Mr Marchese: You're quite right; we're not sure how many there are, although they estimated that they think there are about 10 of them that are for family values. I want to ask them that question. Family values means, if I can define it for them, as least as it relates to this, that you have a manageable workweek that allows you, as a mom or a dad, to get back home and do your duties at home: looking after your family, looking after your children, having enough time to relax, enough time to be able to spend with the children to help them grow emotionally, intellectually and physically. I think those would be the values these people would be espousing, if indeed there is this group actively working in there, saying, "That's why we have a family values group." Where are they? Fighting for whom? I can see one of them hiding away, skulking under the seat because he doesn't want to be identified with a family values caucus that could support a bill that is about to cause the ruin of not just some families but many families in Ontario.

We hear the minister so proudly, in his own peacockish sort of way, say, "We are a government that is for flexibility and adaptability. We are modernizing the workplace." He says it proudly. "We are modernizing. What's wrong with allowing the individual to work longer if he so chooses? What's wrong with that?"

Mr Kormos: Oh, right. It's the right to work.

Mr Marchese: The right to work for the individual. Anyone can work 12 hours a day if they so wish. What's so wrong with that? And what's so wrong with a family values caucus supporting an individual's right to work as long as he wants to and as long as he needs to—

Mr Kormos: At \$6.85 an hour.

Mr Marchese:—for a mere \$6.85 an hour?

I think, Peter, my good buddy, the reason they're doing this is because people are so darn poor under this government that they've got to work 60 hours a week, at a minimum, in order to make up for the cuts this government is engaged in against the people of Ontario. First they chop them down to size. The middle class is about to disappear and what we've got left is a smaller and smaller, shrinking middle class that's growing this base of working poor in the middle. Because that's happening, the minister quite rightly says, "They've got to work more to be able to make ends meet. That's why we're giving them the right to work," because individuals have a—see you later, Chris.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I know. I said see you later.

Mr Kormos: His PA's here.

Mr Marchese: Where's the PA? There he is, proudly seated in his seat.

The right to work is what this is all about. It's called adaptability, flexibility, modernizing the workplace, giving the individual the tools and the right to work as long as he needs to to support his family, at \$6.85 an hour.

Mr Kormos: Twelve hours, 14 hours, 15 hours a day; maybe even 80 hours a week.

Mr Marchese: Twelve hours might be long. It could hurt the worker's ability to stay awake and maybe cause some serious injury to himself or herself or the co-workers. But it's his right to work as long as he needs to, and Chris Stockwell, the Minister of Labour, is making it happen because he's for the little guy. Should that worker be tired after working three, four or five days, 12-hour shifts, he might not be awake enough to be able to stay away from the dangers of the workplace and something serious could happen. The worker could be injured. The children of that worker would find themselves in total misery, the spouse of that individual would find herself in total, abject misery, all because the government says, "We need to modernize, to keep up with the times, to give the individual the right to work. We need to do that." And Stockwell—here's our man—is making it happen, because we need the money.

My father worked very hard to provide for six of us. People like me worried about how hard he had to work to provide for the six of us. My mother worked at home. These are not easy experiences for working people. They devote themselves completely to their family. What we now have is a situation where men and women have to devote themselves completely to the family, because one salary is not enough. You have men and women working harder, longer, for less money than ever in the history of Ontario, in a good economy yet, to make ends meet. Because they're not making any money, these people have to work longer—a sad, pitiful state of affairs.

1620

How could you, good people of Ontario, taxpayers, good citizens, permit such a government to do this, and to do it without any consultation whatsoever? You

understand that the only way they could keep themselves accountable is to take such a bill, with all the multitude of minutiae that is contained therein, and put it out to the public so they could review it and assess for themselves the impact on them and their families.

Hon Mrs Marland: They were consulting when Minister Witmer was the Minister of Labour.

Mr Marchese: Minister Stockwell said, "We don't need to do that. We're just changing a couple of acts." We're rewriting the act completely.

Hon Mrs Marland: For three years.

Mr Marchese: The minister for kids is saying we've consulted for three years. I guess that ought to do it.

Mr Kormos: Who did they consult with?

Mr Marchese: I don't know who they consulted, but the minister for children said they consulted for three years, so it ought to be enough because she supports the bill, and because she is for little kiddies she must feel—

Mr Kormos: They must have asked Stockwell Day.

Mr Marchese: Sure they asked Stockwell Day because he likes this. Stock said, "It's OK by me. Working men and women have the right to do whatever they want, and work longer, harder, for less. It's their right."

Minister for children, how could you say we dealt with this? How could you not give those working men and women the ability—

Hon Mrs Marland: Three Ministers of Labour—

Mr Marchese: I understand that. I know, but bear with me for a couple of seconds.

Hon Mrs Marland: I will. I'm trying.

Mr Marchese: How could you not give those men and women out there, real people, not abstractions—moms and dads, grandpas and grandmas, kids and young people, 18-year-olds, 20-year-olds—why wouldn't you give them the ability, the power to be able to say, "This is interesting. I don't think I agree with this"? Give them the power to disagree with you. Give them the opportunity to say, "Yes, I like this," and, "No, I don't." You're not giving the public the opportunity to make you accountable. How could you play this divine role, this ex cathedra position you take—that's a good Latin word; probably only the lawyers would understand that word—giving yourselves such divine powers in the position you hold to say to the public, "We are doing this for your own good. We don't need to hear from you."

How could you, taxpayers of Ontario, take this lying down and simply let the opposition parties deal with this and not have you out in the streets demonstrating against a government that punishes you and treats you like a child and says, "We don't need to hear from you"? How could you allow them to do that? You ought to be outraged that this government holds you in such deep contempt. Yet bill after bill, these things get passed in a short period of time and we don't hear enough from the general taxpayer of Ontario saying, "Something is deeply wrong with this." We don't hear from you, and surely I know that you, as working men and women, have serious concerns about this bill. I know that. It's basic. I don't have to give you facts. It's very basic.

Look what a number of articles have said about this. This is very revealing. For those taxpayers who don't want to listen to me, this is what others have said on this. This is from the Sudbury Star:

"Workers who complain around the water cooler that their jobs are killing them might be right, a new study by Statistics Canada suggests."

Mr Kormos: Literally.

Mr Marchese: Literally.

"The number of Canadians working long hours has climbed since 1980," and this minister says it can keep on climbing a little more; the workers can take it.

"The result may be an unhealthier lifestyle and, for women, an increased risk of depression...." Yet the government doesn't seem to read stuff like this.

"It is premature to make comparisons with the Japanese phenomenon of *karoshi*—death from overwork, said author Margo Shields....

"But 'there is currently sufficient evidence to raise concerns about the health and safety risks of working long hours,' she said."

This is people studying this matter, but you don't need researchers to tell us these things. You can, taxpayers and citizens, know instinctively that if they force you to work longer hours, it's going to have unhealthy consequences on you and your lives. You know that instinctively. You don't need it from me and you don't need it from PhDs to tell you that.

"The study concluded that women who work long hours are twice as likely to experience depression.

"Moving to a longer workweek was associated with 'unhealthy weight gain' for men, increased smoking for both sexes and with an increase in drinking for women."

How could you, family values caucus—

Hon Mrs Marland: On a point of order, Speaker: I think I heard this member refer to lies and I don't think that is considered parliamentary language under our standing orders.

The Acting Speaker: I didn't hear it, but if the member did, I'm sure he's an honourable person and will retract it if it is so.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. She obviously heard something else.

"Overtime can equal anxiety.

"The study does not directly discuss if overwork causes an unhealthy lifestyle or if workaholic tendencies are part of a self-destructive pattern that might also include alcohol, tobacco or other abuses.

"Some international studies have looked at stress in the workplace but few have looked at the impact of long hours on health.

"It is hypothesized that long hours bring about unhealthy lifestyle changes such as smoking, alcohol abuse, lack of physical activity, sleeplessness, poor eating habits and fewer chances for medical examinations."

How much more abuse can you give this poor body of ours? How much more can human beings, as frail as they are at the moment, how much more can Minister Stockwell continue to flagellate and beat and whack people—

women, men, young people—until the body says, "I can't take it any more"? How long?

Minister Stockwell can stand up and say, "No, this is flexibility for the workers. What's wrong with that? The worker can say no if he doesn't want to work longer."

Good taxpayers of Ontario, sir, madam, how could you support this minister who says you have the power to go and tell your employer, if you don't want to work those hours—you can say no to them and the employer will simply say, "No problemo, Mr Smith. You don't have to work them long hours. We can accommodate that. And by the way, Mr Smith, we won't need you tomorrow morning. Don't you worry your little heart. You don't have to worry that your poor little frail body can't take it, because tomorrow we don't have work for you. Is that OK with you, Mr Smith?"

Then you can go to Mr Stockwell and say, "Mr Stockwell, sir, I said this to my employer the other day, because you told me I could tell them if I don't want to work them long hours and the employer will say, 'OK, no problemo,' and he said, 'Look, if you don't like to work here you can just leave.' He said, 'No problemo,' and Minister Stockwell, sir, please help me out because I'm all alone. The guy just fired me." Is Minister Stockwell going to be there to say, "No problemo, Mr Smith, I'll take care of it. I'm going to call Mr Jones and tell him he has no right to fire you"?

Mr Kormos: He'll call Mr Jones and say, "Right on."

Mr Marchese: Yes, Mr Jones and Mr Stockwell already have an understanding.

Mr Kormos: Oh, an intimacy.

Mr Marchese: They talk. They consulted for three years. Like the minister for kiddies said, they've been talking for three years and they're in agreement that this is part of the new flexible workweek.

1630

You know, Mr Taxpayer, sir, that you don't have much power when it comes to dealing with your employer, don't you? I know that. My daughter, who has worked in many retail stores, knows that. That's why they all shut up when there is a problem in the employer's office. When an employee has a problem, as my daughter and her colleagues did, wherever she has worked in the retail sector, she said to me, "Dad, I can't say anything because if I say something I'm going to get fired," and you know that's the reality, Mr Taxpayer, sir.

Camera, put a light on that guy over there—Minister Stockwell. He's over there.

Mr Kormos: Shine a little light on him.

Mr Marchese: Shine a little light on Mr Stockwell's night.

Mr Taxpayer, sir, you've got to keep an eye on what's happening here. I can't do it for you alone. My good buddy from Niagara Centre, Peter Kormos, can't do it for you. Our other colleagues from the NDP can't do it for you. We're not enough because our powers are so limited. Our powers come from your desire to fight a government that's about to whack you and whack you good and is going to whack you for a hell of a long time,

and you won't be able to get it back until you boot this government out. But why wait to boot them out to protest against the abuses against your body, against your family, against your children? Why would you do that? Why would you wait for so long? You've got to get up and fight. You can't leave it to us. You can't.

Minister Stockwell says they'll extend parental leave from 18 to 35 weeks to match federal parental leave provisions, and then he rolled it into this other malfeasance known as Bill 147. You see, if he had separated the two we would have supported this. We want to support parental leave because we think as a family values caucus, and New Democrats are, that the people need a break. They want to be with their kids. But with the other part of the bill, they won't be able to be with their kids because they will be in the shop working until they drop. So this guy says, "You can have a year," but on the other hand he says, "But you're going to have to work. You won't be able to see your kiddies any more."

Separate the two, is what we asked them to do. Shelley Martel our colleague said, "Support this extension of 18 weeks to 35 weeks." Minister Stockwell at the time said, "No, nobody's asking for this. We've got to consult our small business employers. They don't like it. We've got to talk to them. Sorry." Then, lo and behold, he inserts this element into this bill. Why does he do that? To make it harder for the opposition to oppose the other malfeasance of Bill 147, thinking he can suck us into supporting a bad bill by putting a good measure in the bill.

I am calling upon you, Mr Taxpayer, citizens of Ontario, those of you who go beyond the pocketbook and realize that bills like this are going to suck your body out of itself, that you won't have anything left for your children and your families—they're going to whack you and whack your body good until you've got nothing left to do with that body. I'm calling on you to fight Monsieur Stockwell and the malfeasance of Bill 147, and do it now.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Hon Mrs Marland: I'm sorry that the member for Trinity-Spadina was not called to order on some of his unparliamentary language. It is 4:35 in the afternoon and it's quite possible there may well be some young people who are watching this afternoon. I would not like them to think that a number of the words this member used are considered parliamentary under our standing orders. We take personal exception to that.

I will, however, say in comment on this—I don't know whether it was a tirade or how to describe it, but it was certainly a performance for the cameras. When the member for Trinity-Spadina finally said, "You can't leave it to us," he obviously is pleading for more members for his caucus. Those of us who had to change the standing orders of this House to make their nine-member caucus a legal entity in the operation of this place know that since they fell from government—when they were in government from 1990 to 1995 they had 74 seats, as I recall, and now they're down to nine. The good news is that indeed the people of this province are not interested

in leaving it to them. They have elected a government for a second term with a majority number of seats, and it's this government, our government, that has created 830,000 net new jobs in five years, 279,000 of which have been created only in the past year. So I would say to the member that this legislation is further confirmation that we do indeed care for the people in this province because we want them to have jobs.

Mr Colle: I certainly appreciated the dissertation on the member from Trinity-Spadina's out-of-body experiences. It was hard to keep track of all his comments, but he was in general expressing a lot of distress, and his distress I think was focused on the fact that this legislation does have a negative impact on working families. That is the major problem, in that there are very few enhancements or protections for ordinary working families who spend long hours trying to make a living, and they are basically threatened with making these so-called deals with employers who hold all the levers.

There are some very scrupulous, wonderful employers out there, but what I worry about is that employee who is faced with one of a number of employers who are not scrupulous. That's the concern. I don't see any possible way that protections are there for people in those situations.

This government takes a lot of credit for things. I should remind them again that almost every recognized economist will tell you—I heard an economist this morning on the radio who was asked, "Why is the Ontario economy doing so well? Is it because of the tax cuts or is it because of something else?" He said, "Without a doubt the Ontario economy is doing well because it exports to the United States, and the United States economy is doing so well." So tax cuts have very little to do with it. What this government should be spending more time on is investing in children, investing in working families, not just helping the big guys. Help the little guy once in a while.

Mr Kormos: I'm grateful to the member for Trinity-Spadina for his comments on this bill and his contribution to this debate. You see, I remember the 1950s as a kid. I remember my folks working six-day workweeks, seven-day workweeks, and folks throughout Crowland, throughout Welland, doing the same. I remember their fight for a 40-hour workweek. I remember reading things like *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics* and *Life* magazine and the promise—some of you will recall this during the 1950s—of shorter workweeks and more time for families and more time for community and more time for recreational activity, and the fact that robotics and other technologies emerging in that post-war era of the 1950s were going to make working women's and men's lives better and that the wealth they create was going to be shared a little more equitably with those workers, the women and men who create that wealth but who, inevitably, never get to own it.

Now, as someone who's far older, quite frankly than my parents were at that point in my life, I see those same kinds of families working harder, working longer and

working for less. I see those kind of working families that I grew up a part of, and in the community I grew up in, like Crowland, Welland and Thorold, I see those working families receiving less of the wealth they create while at the same time the volume of the wealth they create has grown exponentially. The fact is that there are huge amounts of wealth being created in this province right now and it's increasingly being monopolized in the hands of fewer and fewer people. The Frank Stronachs of the world don't share their wealth that's created by their workers with those workers. They squeeze those workers as tight as they can, and this government has clearly taken a side. It's on the side of corporate bosses, not on the side of workers or workers' families—no question about it.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I will say on the record right here and now, I do not believe for one moment that Bill 147 will suck the body out of anybody's self. I say that to you. No one will suck their body out of themselves because of 147. I will go on the record with that. I think you spend way too much time talking about a body part that shouldn't be talked about too much in this place.

Further, I want to ask Mr Kormos—in the 1950s you were reading *Scientific American*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Life* magazine, and you were born in 1952. So let's see; that would mean that at four and five years old, you were reading *Popular Mechanics*. You were one bright little guy, weren't you? Obviously we should have had longer workweeks.

1640

To listen to this stuff, I'll tell you one thing: the NDP never had to worry about workweeks, because nobody was working. That was one thing. Everybody was on welfare, for heaven's sakes. I don't know why you're worried so much. You didn't have to worry about it, I guess.

The one thing I will say you should have worried about is, if this was such a horrible thing, longer workweeks and vacation etc, why were you issuing permits to allow people to do it? You never asked—

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): For the exemption, and you know it.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Oh, no, they're not the exemption, as I hear from the member for Windsor. You also had 24 sectors excluded from the employment standards: agriculture, mining, hospitality—I can go on. Millions of people weren't covered under the Employment Standards Act, and now you've found the Lord in opposition. This was a horrible thing going on in this bill, when you were excluding millions of people from working under that act.

I want to get back to the one point that you should talk about. If you were so concerned about the family and you were reading *Popular Mechanics* when you were four years old, why did you introduce Sunday shopping? That was the one specific killer of the family day: Sunday shopping. You were opposed in opposition; you were human pup tents, you folded so quick over here.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Windsor West. Oh, I'm sorry. The member gets a response; I made a mistake. The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: I thank the minister for participating in the debate. It's always a pleasure. I enjoy him and his remarks.

The reason I made reference to the body parts is because this guy, the minister for work, is going to force people to work harder, longer, for less money, work till you drop. The body works, you see; it's the body that works. It's not a machine; the body is not a machine. He is forcing people to work harder, longer, for less. What he's saying is, "Don't worry, workers, I ain't doing that. It's just the opposition that talks about it. They're just inventing it. I won't require you to work harder, longer, for less. I won't require you to work till you drop. That's not my intent. I'm just going to make sure that you and your employer can work things out, you know? You just go and talk to the employer and just work things out, because we want to give you the right to work as long as you want." Working longer, harder, for less, making the body work till they drop. Men and women, a family values kind of caucus. This is the family values Conservative Party at work.

Here's a study that says the University of Montreal found that couples working these non-standard hours were twice as likely to separate as those working the standard 9 to 5. As if it didn't add enough abuses to what happens to individuals, divorce goes up; sleeplessness causes injuries in the workplace. Working harder, longer, for less means you don't see your children. Families, men and women, don't see their kids. Then we have law problems to deal with, and you've got the Conservative government, the law and order, coming in with more laws to keep you down. Minister Stockwell, you are so good.

I am calling you, taxpayers, the ones who support these people, to fight Bill 147, as is your right to do.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gill: I'm very pleased to join in this debate today on Bill 147, the Employment Standards Act, 2000. As we go about debating these bills, many times I'm sure people at home start wondering, what is it in particular that they are talking about? I want to highlight that this is Bill 147, the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

I'm going to take you back to the year 1968, 32 years ago. I was 17 years old, and that is when, with my parents, I came to Canada. This Employment Standards Act coincidentally goes back to 1968. I remember going to university, and things have changed in the last 32 years, as you know, in every sector of life, including perhaps life itself.

There used to be these huge computers that filled up whole rooms that were air-conditioned, humidity controlled and everything, and I remember we would have to line up first of all to punch cards with FORTRAN. FORTRAN was the language of science, of engineering. You would line up, you would get your turn and punch these cards, and then you would line up again. After the

program was run, you would invariably find a glitch—I would say in 99% of the cases there was a glitch—and you had to line up again.

What I'm coming to is these days we all have different technologies. I see the minister for children has this new gadget these days on which she can receive e-mails, and she can transmit e-mails right from her chair if she wants to do so. What I'm arriving at basically is in the last 32 years things have changed for the better. I'm certainly very happy to have evolved in the same way from 32 years ago.

What Bill 147 does is bring the reality into the workplace. Things certainly have changed over the years. People are using computers every day. For example, IT: information technology. The word did not exist at that time. Nobody talked about the IT sector, and now this has become one of the prominent sectors and many young people today are going into that sector and benefiting from that. We wanted to make sure that the current employment standards reflect the reality of those changes which have come about because of the evolution of the workplace. I am certainly pleased.

I will be sharing my time with my colleagues from Durham and Niagara Falls.

As a member of the Mike Harris government, I'm very proud of the things we've done to increase the freedoms and opportunities for working people in Ontario. Since this government was first elected in 1995, our labour legislation has played a part in one of the biggest booms in our province's history. We can talk about the reasons for it, whether it's free trade, whether it's the 93% trade with the USA, whether it's the tax cuts; there are many factors.

What has been proven—and I'm going to use words which you might have heard a few years ago—is tax cuts create jobs. A lot of people didn't believe that. But if you look at the recent rhetoric that went on in the federal election campaign, which ended on November 27, every party, including the federal Liberals, said that they would be giving tax cuts to businesses and to individuals—even parties like the NDP, who said they don't believe in tax cuts, that they believe in sharing their wealth. They believe that the rich people should be made poorer so that the poor can benefit. That is a myth. You do not benefit the poor by making the rich poor.

Because of our actions, we have been able to create 830,000 net new jobs. I'm going to qualify "net new jobs." We never said that we are going to only increase jobs or employment. We said there will be cuts wherever there's fat in the public sector, in whatever areas, but we promised there would be an increment of net new jobs. As I've said before, we are known as a government that keeps our word.

1650

In one way, we were wrong, because we actually surpassed what we said. We did better than what we said we were going to do. In the last year, since 1999, we have increased net new jobs by 279,000. That is an unprecedented increase in net new jobs. Businesses are

flocking to Ontario. Ontarians are back to work. Incomes are rising. Taxes are falling. Literally, the cranes are back in terms of more construction going on.

Recently, I was at a hotel opening. A good friend of mine opened up a new hotel at Jarvis and Dundas. I didn't realize, until one speaker said, that this was the first hotel opening in the last 14 years. This opening of a hotel, especially in the Jarvis and Dundas area where the neighbourhoods were going down, is going to bring back prosperity. It's a bold move by this good business friend of mine, Mr Steve Gupta, and I certainly want to congratulate him for having done so.

Ontario is back on the right track, but we must not become complacent. This government has taken strong steps since the last election in establishing workplace democracy and sunshine laws for union leaders. We have restored the balance between unions and businesses, as well as between unions and their members. At all times, our focus has been on the individual freedoms of Ontario's workers. We have fought to ensure that their rights are paramount, whether they are dealing with the employer or with the union.

The next step in labour law reform for this government comes in this bill. It is our plan to move employment standards into the 21st century. Over the past few weeks, opponents of the balanced labour legislation have been spreading a lot of rhetoric and deliberately misleading information in the media and in Ontario's workplaces about this bill. I want to take this opportunity to set the record straight. It is important that Ontarians know the truth about our proposals.

The current Employment Standards Act, as I said before, was enacted in 1968 and has not been significantly updated since the early 1970s. The world has changed, society has changed, and workplace laws have to change to keep up with the way we work and live in the 21st century.

Many provisions of the current act do not make sense in our new business environment. The system of permits required is bureaucratic and wasteful. Modern working arrangements are not taken into account and time off in lieu of overtime pay is not even contemplated in the old act.

I want to shed some more light on what I mean by work permits and stuff like that. Under the current law, whenever there is a deviation from the set standards, people have to apply to get a permit. Under the NDP government and, I will admit, even under our government, as many as 18,000 applications were processed to allow people that minor flexibility. The fact of the matter is that workplaces need flexibility. Even though you would think they should be able to plan better—and I agree with that—from time to time, because of a surge in demand, workplaces have to ask employees to work overtime. To be able to do that, there is red tape in the system right now where there's a standard form they have to fax in to the ministry. And it's almost like rubber-stamping; it is approved. Some 90 permits, on average, are approved on a daily basis. What this bill

does is take the initiative of reduction of the red tape one step further. It allows employees and employers to come to an agreement if they so decide, and they do not need the government to interfere with whether they should work extra one day and less another day.

For Ontario to remain competitive, we must continually modernize our laws and regulations and reduce the size of government. We do not need to legislate or regulate. We must ensure that the provisions we pass are clear and not a burden on business and individuals. This bill contains a number of specific measures that will increase the individual freedom of workers without placing a great strain on our businesses, large or small.

I want to make it perfectly clear: the government is not proposing to force anyone to work 60 hours a week. Whoever says otherwise is just scaremongering among Ontario's workers. I certainly want to admit that the opposition think it's their job to perhaps scaremonger, to scare the workers of Ontario that everybody will have to work 60 hours. But as I said before, all this bill does, if passed, is give the employers and the employees that flexibility I talked about.

Currently, the act permits employers to ask employees to work extra hours, but that can only be done by obtaining a permit. Another myth is that the government is proposing to remove the right to overtime pay. There were some numbers being thrown about yesterday that it's going to be averaged over four weeks, and that's quite true. The overtime is going to be averaged over four weeks, and that is if the worker desires to do so. If somebody works 60 hours today and 20 hours next week and 40 the week after and 40 again, if they so desire, they may wish to average the overtime. But if they don't, they are certainly entitled to overtime for the 60 hours that they worked. The ability of employers and employees to agree, for their own specific reasons, to average overtime has existed since 1968. It's nothing new, and the system has worked well. We are not creating anything new right here.

Employees, as has been said before, working in nuclear plants, hospitals, manufacturing, automotive and IT industries are already familiar with overtime averaging. Many of the province's nurses, security and maintenance employees, software designers and miners average overtime in order to facilitate compressed workweek schedules. The only difference between the current act and the government's proposal is the necessity of a rubber stamp from the Ministry of Labour. As I said before, overtime would continue to be payable at time and a half after 44 hours per week. Overtime hours could be averaged over four weeks with the written agreement of the employee, without ministry approval.

A new provision that benefits workers would allow employees to take time off in lieu of overtime. This is something interesting: they could take time off in lieu of overtime at a rate of time and a half. So they're not giving up any rights. This is an entirely new right gained by Ontario's workers. Time off in lieu of overtime provides an employer with flexibility while giving em-

ployees the benefit of a significant tax break. Small businesses, in particular, will benefit from this proposal, as many cannot afford monetary overtime payments.

Another myth is that the government plans to let employers force their workers to take vacations one day at a time. That is wrong. The fact is that employers would still be required by law to schedule vacations in minimum periods of one week or more. Only employees, not employers, could consent to a different arrangement.

Some people are also spreading the myth that employees could be forced to sign agreements to work excess hours and go without overtime pay and vacation periods or else lose their jobs. That's wrong as well because that's against the law. Employers could be charged for that. In fact, we are proposing to hire more investigators, increase their powers, increase proactive inspections and increase fines against employers who try to break the law.

1700

The maximum penalty for repeat offenders could go as high as half a million dollars and result in a jail term of up to one year. In addition, the government proposes mandatory posting of employee rights in every workplace that will include a toll-free complaint line and the ability to make anonymous complaints. This measure will discourage intimidation in the very small number of non-compliant workplaces.

Our reforms are designed to protect employees while at the same time allowing individuals to structure work schedules that meet their own needs. The fact that the government is proposing mandatory written agreements between employees and employers for arrangements that deviate from the standard for hours of work and overtime averaging is a new safeguard where none existed before.

Upon inspection, workplaces would be required to produce documentation as proof of employee agreement. Currently there is no such requirement. Bill 147 reduces the Ministry of Labour's involvement in issuing permits for variations from the standards in the act and allows greater flexibility in the workplace. To balance this flexibility and ensure that vulnerable employees are protected, we will establish stronger enforcement provisions.

Currently, employment standards officers can only issue orders to pay for monetary violations. They are without the authority to order employers to comply with the act or address non-monetary violations such as failure to keep records. The only recourse presently is prosecution in provincial court, which is very expensive and time-consuming. The authority of employment standards officers to issue orders will be extended to all provisions of the act. They will be able to use a system of fines as an enforcement tool. The current act allows for a maximum fine of \$50,000 and/or six months in jail. The new standards would allow for escalating fines: \$100,000 maximum for the first offence, \$250,000 for the second, and half a million dollars for the third offence. The maximum jail sentence would be increased from six months to a year. These proposals are aimed at repeat offenders. Good employers do not break the law. We're aiming for

a level playing field where the small number of law-breakers cannot benefit from cutting corners.

As we promised in the Blueprint, employees in workplaces with 50 or more employees will be provided with up to 10 unpaid days of family crisis leave. This is an important humanitarian change that is long overdue in Ontario. This will avoid, as I said yesterday while I was talking about the same bill, the scheduled sickness that sometimes happens in the workplace these days. People know that they have to take their loved one to a doctor's appointment or many other things and they know they're going to be sick, so-called, next Thursday. This will avoid that. This will give them the right to attend to those very important family-related emergencies.

So this bill overall, contrary to what the opposition is saying, is a good bill. It's a good bill for the employees, it's a good bill for the employers, and it gets the government out of the hair of workplaces.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Questions and comments?

Mr Colle: Just to comment on the remarks of the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, I guess the thing that perplexes me and I think many people out there is that the member stands up and starts talking about all these misconceptions about the bill, all these myths, misunderstandings, and for the life of me, I can't understand why they wouldn't have at least one or two days of public hearings to clear the air. I'm just wondering, why wouldn't they have these hearings to invite all the employees, invite the representative labour groups, invite the members of family organizations and let them come in here and ask questions of the minister and the bureaucrats? I guess that's the only thing that I find very perplexing and maybe the member could respond to that: why no public hearings? As you know, Mr Speaker, this is a pattern of this government. We passed another bill the other day—no public hearings. They pass bill after bill without public hearings.

To get back to the point of this bill, what we're saying here is that it's not a level playing field. For the member to put forward the proposition that there's a level playing field out there between employees and employers—I'm sure he doesn't really believe that. There is an advantage in the hand of the employer and anyone who would say the employees have the advantage is certainly dreaming in Technicolor.

What this bill does, as I said, is weaken a lot of legislation, a lot of attempts by governments in the past to strengthen the protection of workers, to protect families from the undue hardship of long hours and stress. This bill is a regressive bill. It takes us back 30 years into an era when employees had very little protection and it really not only jeopardizes the worker; as I said, this hits right home to the families that are going to be threatened by this extra onus on their working day.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I'm very pleased to be able to join in the discussion and comments on the submission made by the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, and an excellent presentation it was, I might add.

Clearly, the member for the Liberal side wasn't listening to his submission. He starts off by suggesting that the minister hasn't held any public meetings. The member has quite clearly indicated, and I believe the minister on several occasions has indicated, that the government, first of all, released a consultation paper in July, 2000, it held public meetings in five Ontario cities and it received submissions from more than 240 groups and individuals.

Yet again the members from the Liberal side like to perpetuate this myth that somehow this government doesn't consult, when it has probably consulted more often this year than they did when they were in power. When you consider that this is an Employment Standards Act that has been in effect for 30 years and hasn't received any comprehensive review whatsoever in that 30 years, I put it to the Liberal member across the way, where was he? Where was your government when you were ruling for five years and you did absolutely nothing to modernize the workplace?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to respond to the remarks by the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. I want to talk about the part of the comments where he was referring to the financial and fiscal record of the government, and I hope he'll comment on this. I was looking at the release this week on the finances of the province and I see that the government says the debt of the province has gone up by \$22 billion since Premier Harris became Premier. That, by the way, is 25%. We're paying about \$9 billion of interest every year on the debt. Premier Harris took it up 25%, so almost \$2.5 billion a year of extra interest charges because of the debt.

We've always said, as Alberta did—what Alberta did was to balance its budget and then it cut taxes. What Quebec did was to balance its budget and then cut taxes. What the federal government did was to balance its budget and then cut taxes. What Ontario chose to do was borrow money to cut taxes. It borrowed \$10 billion just to cut the taxes.

So I just say to the public of Ontario, the debt under Premier Harris has gone up 25%, \$22 billion. We are paying an extra \$2.5 billion every year in interest costs. He'll say we needed that to stimulate the economy, but again, you look in this report and what it says is—this is the government's report—that what has been driving the Ontario economy is exports. It points out here that 10 years ago exports were equivalent to about 29% of the gross domestic product, and today it's 55%.

I just say, because I'm referring to the remarks of the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, that the tax cuts could have been handled in a completely different way, not borrowing the money but doing what Alberta, Quebec and the federal government did; that is, getting our fiscal house in order and then cutting the taxes, and the exports would have continued to drive the Ontario economy.

1710

Hon Mr Stockwell: I compliment the member on his statement in the House today.

I say to the member opposite from Scarborough, that it would have been really interesting had you campaigned on that. The trouble is, you didn't. You campaigned on tax cuts too.

Mr Phillips: Oh, I don't think so.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Mr Phillips, please, I read the red book. You had tax cuts in there. Don't tell me you didn't. You had tax cuts in 1995 and in 1999.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Now the argument is that it wasn't quite as high. But the point he was trying to make was that we would have to give tax cuts—we had a 30% tax cut—and have to borrow and in fact the debt would go up. But he's just splitting hairs. He had tax cuts too, in 1995 and 1999. You would have had to borrow and you would have had—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Yes, you would have. Why are you saying no? That's simple arithmetic. Come on, be fair. I listened very carefully to you and I accept the fact that you've been consistent in the criticism, but you haven't been consistent in your campaigning. You promised tax cuts in 1995 and you promised tax cuts in 1999. Since you promised those cuts, all you're saying is it's how big they were. You're not saying you'd do any different; all you're saying is that you maybe would have given smaller tax cuts, but regardless, you would have had to borrow money. It may make a lot of sense in here, but then you should have campaigned on that. The trouble is you campaigned on the exact opposite, both in 1995 and 1999.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's not fair to heckle. You did. Read your red book. You know you promised tax cuts.

I say to the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, I had public hearings on this white paper. Two years ago we had public hearings. I went to London, Windsor, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Toronto, and I was out in Sarnia and to Oshawa. I think it's better to get public input on a white paper before you draft a bill. A lot of those complaints and issues that the unions brought to me during that white paper made it into the bill. They told me they should have a 10-day crisis leave. They told me the inspectors needed more power. They told me they needed to do spot audits. It made the bill. We publicly consulted. That's not fair comment.

The Speaker: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

Mr Gill: I want to thank all the members who took part in this discussion, from Eglinton-Lawrence, Scarborough Centre, Scarborough-Agincourt and the Minister of Labour.

I want to commend the Minister of Labour because I believe it was in July of this year when we had the white paper out so people could send in their feedback. He visited five cities and more than 240 groups or individuals made a presentation, contrary to what the member for Eglinton-Lawrence was saying, that we did not go out.

Mr Colle: On a point of order, Speaker: It's the right of this Parliament to have public hearings. They denied us the public—

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. The member take his seat.

Mr Gill: —that he is currently wherever people have been brainwashed that the sky is falling.

The minister went to Oshawa and only 28 people showed up in the riding, which is a so-called big labour type, General Motors and everything. The minister was out in Sarnia as well, and in Kitchener, so he was doing his due diligence. He has been out there making sure that some of the myths the opposition is trying to spread are nullified. I want to congratulate him.

Some of the things this bill does, but nobody has talked about—I'll take the next 16 seconds because that's all the time I've got left. Direct deposit of wages: the law did not allow previously for the employers, even though it has become a common practice, to have direct deposit for their employees. This bill, if passed, would allow that.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Papatello: I am happy to speak to the Employment Standards Act amendments tonight. I wanted to speak in particular to how this bill will affect women in the workforce. We asked the Minister of Labour today in the House during question period—I am very happy to be sharing time with the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, who will be able to take half of my time.

I want to speak about women in the workforce, women who live in Windsor West, who work in a production-type company, who work every three months not knowing whether they're going to work the next three months. It is a very labour-intensive position they have. There isn't a lot of skill required when they get the job. It is above minimum wage; it usually ranges between \$8 and \$12 an hour. They are on call. They get called that week; maybe they're going to get called the next week.

These are the women I was thinking about when I was reading the contents of this bill. Some of these women are new immigrants. Some of them have been in Windsor for a long time and don't speak the English language well but understand enough to get by, certainly. These are the women I was thinking about when I read the contents of the bill. These are the same women who will not say to the employer, "No, I can't work the extra time. I have to get my children from school." These are the women who are not going to have protection. These are the same women I have met who are not going to pick up the phone and dial 1-800-something-or-other and say, "I've got to lodge a complaint."

These are the people the Ministry of Labour is responsible for and is letting down completely with this bill. I resent the fact that the Minister of Labour, of all ministers, uses the terminology "union bosses." I don't hear anyone calling police chiefs "boss hogs." It's a very uncomplimentary term. Why would they ever stand in the House and speak about people who are duly elected? Clearly this minister has never been a member of a union.

I've been a member of a union, and I know that when we select our union leaders, those are the people we elect to represent me. I find it insulting to think they would treat these people with this kind of disregard and label them "union bosses." It's just rude. If the Minister of Labour had any integrity, he would stand up and say, "I apologize. I'm not going to do that again because people find it offensive." I find it offensive. Having been in a union workforce, I find it offensive that our own Premier of Ontario speaks to people in this manner and calls them names and lets the view be that it's OK to talk about groups in this manner; it isn't.

Of all groups that come, the Conservative MPPs in this House stand up and talk about how they modernizing the Employment Standards Act. "Modernizing" means that it's going to be better for people in the workforce, and I don't believe that's true with what you've changed.

We've brought up the point that they're going to allow a 60-hour workweek to be the norm, and they say, "No, no, that's not the case. It's going to be voluntary, if the employer and the employee agree." If it is not the case that there are going to be 60-hour workweeks, why was it put in the bill?

We have allowances in the bill now to change how vacation time can be taken. In essence, they can give the vacation one day at a time, as opposed to a week at a time or two weeks at a time. When we bring up that some employer may take advantage of that and individuals won't be able to say no to what the employer is requesting, they say, "No, no, that's not going to happen because you can call a 1-800 number and complain about that." That is not the reality in the workforce.

I go back to the women I know who work in a circumstance where they need to work. Often they are single moms. These are the same single moms whom the government is determined to keep off the system. If that's the case, they are in a workforce where they are not in a position to say no to an employer, for a whole variety of reasons. Number one, they don't know that they can. If even under the current law they don't know that they can say no, do you honestly believe that with the new law they're going to know that they can say no? If they did say no, the consequence would be a great impact in terms of how long they stay with the company.

We have plants where I come from where these individuals don't know if they will be working there in the next six months. They move from this kind of employment to another, always in a three-month time period. Maybe it's going to go for six weeks, as long as the work holds out. They are not a unionized shop. These are the people who know they have to work, and if they're going to be the individuals on the list who keep saying no to the employer about extra time, "No, I can't take vacation time in that manner," "No, I don't want to switch my lunch time so it's more convenient for the employer," they go to the list. Those are the individuals who don't get called to come back for their next three months' work. Come on. Can the Minister of Labour not understand that that's the reality in the workforce out there?

We are just seeing a glimmer of some kind of slowdown, and all the economists are talking about it. The employers start to sharpen their pencils to see, "How many employees do I need to keep on now?" Of all times, this is when they start taking a sharp look at which of their employees in their view is the most reliable, prepared to go to the wall for the company.

1720

Individuals who would always go to the wall for the company will do so unless it interferes with child care, picking up their children from school. There's been no discussion around the child care industry. Are we going to all of a sudden provide greater access to child care when these hours go into the evening? Is there any recognition that when an employer asks the employee to stay on and the employee can't say no, they are going to cover somehow the additional costs of leaving that child in the daycare centre longer, at an additional cost? It always costs more after hours. Is daycare even available after a prescribed set of hours? Is the daycare industry suddenly going to look and say, "Oh, we've got a new Employment Standards Act. We'd better change our business to comply?" That is not the reality in the workforce.

We asked the minister today in the House, what does Dr Fraser Mustard think of these changes? It behooves the Minister of Labour to answer that question.

This is the government that keeps saying they are there for the kids. The Vanier Institute for Family: you know that these organizations looking out for the best interests of family say that you've got to have parents with the availability, the time to give their kids. Those in a unionized workforce are going to have the protection of their contract. The ones that I fear for most are those who are not under contract. They are, as we pointed out today in question period, young people just making their way; women who will not have a choice because they know they have to work and know they can't say no; new Canadians who won't know the current standards, the current laws, and won't understand the changes. I do not see the Minister of Labour going out of his way to ensure that everyone's going to understand what the rules are.

That's the reality in the workforce. It's certainly the case where I come from. These kinds of places exist. If the Minister of Labour is not interested in helping these people, the ones who need help the most, who is looking after them? It's certainly not the balance of the ministry or the cabinet. I don't hear anyone else standing up in defence of these people who are going to need the protection. That's the job of the Minister of Labour, and instead he brings a bill into this House with complete disregard for the real impact on individuals in the workplace in Ontario.

They did come to Windsor and talk about this. They called it a white paper that they had prepared. They called my office on a Friday to say they were coming on Monday. I believe it was Monday of a constituency week, when all MPPs have their weeks fully booked, when they know they're going to be home in the riding. I

managed to get a staff to attend, sure. What we knew was that every group that presented to the Minister of Labour on that day disagreed, and the only ones we could find that agreed were those that represented independent business, the chamber of commerce. Of course we know what they're going to say, and I'm sure the Minister of Economic Development and Trade looks after their interests well, but the Minister of Labour is responsible for looking after employees in Ontario, and with this bill he hasn't done that. Nor has he answered the very real questions about the effect of this bill on children. What does Fraser Mustard have to say about the extension into a 60-hour workweek? What did he say about that? I ask the minister to answer the question.

I would ask the minister responsible for children to give an opinion: is this in the best interests of children in Ontario?

Is it in the best interests of women? I ask the minister responsible for women. Did she have any input at all into the effects of this kind of law on working women in Ontario?

Those are the questions that should have been asked in public hearings, which we did not have, and there is no excuse for the government to say these things will not happen, because they should not have been put into law or even considered, making the excuse that all kinds of applications were signed away and they were always given permits to do this. Permits are under extenuating circumstances, and that's always been the case. What's very different today is that this government is putting these things into law, a law that is going to be very detrimental to young people, to women and to new Canadians. We're going to wait and see the impact of this, and I'll be voting against this bill.

Mr Phillips: I'm pleased to continue the debate on Bill 147. As kind of an overview of it, almost every area of Ontario's society, in my opinion, over the last five years has been changed quite fundamentally by Premier Harris. Of the four big areas of change, in my opinion the health care system is in worse shape now than it was five years ago, and I believe there's some objective support for that. Our emergency rooms are encountering worse problems now than they did five years ago.

I think our education system is in some considerable turmoil, and I base that on my visits to the schools. Our teachers are under an enormous amount of stress. I've always said this: that education is relatively straightforward, that it is attracting a motivated, qualified, trained teacher and putting that person in front of a group of students in a safe warm environment. It's that simple. We've demoralized our most important asset in education, in my opinion, which is the teacher.

I don't think there's any doubt that our environment's in worse shape now than it was five years ago, and I base that not on just my view; I base it on the Environmental Commissioner's view and on the Provincial Auditor's view.

There's no doubt that the housing situation today is far worse than it was five years ago. I've said many times

that Ontario needs to see 15,000 rental units built every single year. For the last four years, we've need less than 1,000 built every year. There is no doubt a crisis is building.

The reason I mention all those things is that in the area of workplace relations, we've had relative calm in Ontario. I carry around with me a document that the government produces of why businesses should locate in Ontario. This is the document that's used to persuade businesses to come to Ontario, and I think it's a very worthwhile document. This is what the Ontario government says in this document about our workforce and what someone who wants to invest in Ontario should expect here, among other things:

"Our workforce is forward-looking, sensible, self-reliant, loyal and committed to employers' objectives. In 1997 job tenure averaged nine years for managers and eight years for all workers. In the 13 countries studied by Walker Information CMS worldwide, Canadian employees ranked first for commitment and felt that their employers were highly focused on customer quality and employees. The labour-management legal framework is streamlined and balanced. Labour-management relations are constructive and stable. Bargaining is rooting in realism and a clear understanding of the competitive nature of the global economy."

It essentially goes on in this document to say to some potential investor that one of the key reasons you should come to Ontario is that there is a good working relationship between employers and employees. So if we're going to change that, there should be some substantive good reason for it. The bill we're dealing with today is one of three labour relations bills we're dealing with. This bill attempts to provide protection for employees, workers in a non-organized environment. In other words, in a unionized environment the employees have their union to protect their interests. In a non-unionized environment, the employees have something called the Employment Standards Act, and that's what we're debating here today.

I acknowledge that within this bill the crisis leave is an important element and the maternity leave is an important element. The rest of the bill takes away some of the protections employees have had. I just say to us all, why would we do that? Do our employers need substantially more flexibility than they currently have?

I go back to, why would we now turn our attention to fundamental change in an area of Ontario's society and economy that seems to have been working well? I go back a little bit also to the Provincial Auditor. He made his major presentation to the Legislature. This is the Provincial Auditor that we, the Legislature, employs. The Provincial Auditor gives us independent advice. The Provincial Auditor issues annually something he calls a value-for-money report. He issued that report, and when he was commenting on the report he said several things. One thing he said was that since he's been the auditor—he's been the auditor for eight years now—his last two reports, the one that he just presented and the one that he

presented last year, were the two strongest, most condemning of the government of the reports he's presented. I know that's embarrassing to the government because he was here when the NDP was here and, obviously by inference, he's suggesting the NDP was doing a better job of spending the taxpayers' money than this government is. But he made these points.

1730

This is unusual for the Provincial Auditor because he's very cautious in his comments. He said two things. One is that while the civil servants, the bureaucracy, recommend moving slowly, the government tends to want to move very quickly to implement broad-scale things that, in the auditor's opinion, perhaps should be tested. The second major point he made, among others, was that he's talked to most governments in North America about private sector partnerships and, without exception, all who have moved quickly would say that if they could do it all over again they would move more slowly and more deliberately.

The point for raising all of this is that the Provincial Auditor is another independent source that suggests to us that the Harris government is now moving into another area of fundamental, significant dramatic change that, in my opinion, undermines what the government says has been a strength of Ontario's economy. One of the previous speakers on the government side said this is getting government out of the workplace. I understand that, but government has a role to define some fundamental rights in our workplaces, in my opinion, and I think on all sides of this House we would acknowledge that. But this bill takes away some of the protections that employees have in a non-organized environment. I happen to think that the government is probably making a significant mistake here. It is taking away one of the rights workers have had that have maintained a sense of stability and peace in the labour force.

The words that the government has in this document are important in terms of pointing out that "Ontario is fortunate to have a forward-looking, sensible, self-reliant, loyal and committed to employers' objectives"—in other words, I don't think it's any accident that Ontario has been able to enormously successfully compete with the US. Ontario now is the most export-oriented jurisdiction in the world. Nobody exports a larger percentage of their gross domestic product than Ontario does. Our auto plants are renowned across North America for being highly productive. This document actually says that: "Our auto assembly plants, for example, have been consistent winners of North America quality plant awards issued by J.D. Power and Associates, and throughout the 1990s our relative manufacturing unit costs fell further than those in the US."

So here we are taking a successful working environment that Ontario understandably brags about when we're trying to attract business to come here and we're making a decision that we're going to essentially make some very fundamental changes. It's not just this bill. As you know, there are two other bills.

For Ontario, in my opinion, health care, education, the environment and housing have been made worse by this government, and now I think we're about ready to make labour relations worse rather than better.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): It's my pleasure to be able to agree with some of the remarks just made by the member from Scarborough and to feel it my duty to disagree with a couple as well. He has rightly pointed out that we are highly competitive with the United States. He's quite right.

The statistics show us that our growth rate is greater than that in the United States and there's not much doubt that Ontario is very much on the move. If current projections turn out to apply in 2001, we are going to have more vehicles made in the province of Ontario than will be made in the state of Michigan. That is a great credit to the people of this province.

The auditor said the government wants to move more quickly and the bureaucrats want us to move more slowly. That's exactly right. I'd much rather move quickly and get done what needs to be done, than move slowly and deprive the people of what they rightly need and want by way of service and progress from the government.

He has referred to public-private partnerships. These have been highly successful throughout the world and we've engaged in a good number of very successful public-private partnerships. I think we have to continue to explore, as we do, where public-private partnerships are appropriate and to take advantage of those where they are needed. The fact of the matter is that almost all, if not all, of the public-private partnerships we've engaged in have been highly successful.

The member referred to the question of people who have chosen not to be represented by a union. He seems to think these people aren't doing well. That is completely wrong. The non-union sector is thriving. It has people who are skilled, dedicated and doing very well. They have chosen not to be represented by unions because they feel quite capable of representing themselves. I think we can be very proud of the accomplishments of those people. I think his concern is misplaced when he thinks these people are not quite competent and capable individuals who can make the right decisions for themselves.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I listened with great interest to the member's speech, as we all do in this House on these particular matters.

The great concern that has been articulated here is one not with respect to whether we ought to be making things better. It's not the why or the what; it's the how. The great concern that has been articulated by the member is that yet again the government is rushing to judgment without thinking through what the consequences are in fact going to be.

We all know sometimes that's what happens in moments of revolution. We talk about political revolutions, but we are here as legislators and we have had identified

before us a number of serious concerns about the direction in which we're going and the adverse consequences. In the spirit of trying to do the right thing, we may end up having created the reverse situation.

I appreciate the comments from the member. I hope the government takes them all to heart and I hope we can get the changes that are necessary. I fear that's not going to happen; of course, that is not what happens in the year 2000 in the Ontario Legislature.

That said, for all Ontarians who want to know a few years from now how the government of the day got it wrong with respect to this legislation, I know they're going to want to listen to the speech of the member from Scarborough-Agincourt, as did I.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure to respond to the members from Windsor West and Scarborough-Agincourt.

The member from Windsor West told a tale of woe of workers in her riding, perhaps new immigrants, perhaps people who are not readily conversant with the English language, perhaps people who would be too nervous to stand up to a boss who wanted them to work more than 44 hours without overtime pay, to work more hours in a week than they are currently working, too timid to say, "No, I don't want to do that. I don't want to get into that kind of a flexible work relationship. I don't want to sign a form where I give permission."

I wonder why, then, that member and her party—and in fact the member from Scarborough-Agincourt, who I believe was a labour minister in the Peterson government—believed that up until today, in the years they were in office and the NDP was in office, the permit system that's in place right now was OK. It allows the same thing, only you have to get a rubber stamp on a permit, a piece of paper from the Ministry of Labour.

1740

We've heard our labour minister say that in order to protect people like those the member for Windsor West pointed out, we're going to have new responsibilities and rules that hours of work need to be posted in the workplace that aren't there now. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt, when he was the Minister of Labour, didn't insist on that. I don't know why he doesn't talk about that and mention that part of the bill. Now they're going to hire more inspectors and give those inspectors more authority, give them authority to levy even higher fines on people who contravene this act. Why didn't they move to those changes when they were in office and in fact why do they oppose those changes now which will be tougher on workplaces that try to contravene the act?

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): I certainly am pleased to speak on this. When we talk about modernizing, it occurs in many different areas. The one thing that we don't have from Dalton McGuinty or the provincial Liberals is any harmonization, if you will, with what their federal Liberal cousins are doing. I got up on another evening when this issue of modernizing workplaces was discussed in a different debate, and I suggested that members from Dalton McGuinty's Liberals check with their federal Liberals.

Let me tell you where it came up. Sergio Marchi, the World Trade Organization representative for Canada, obviously a very big Liberal—what did he say? The issue was privatization. There was an article in I believe the National Post, and while doing this research, what did he say? He said there are plenty of services that are ripe for privatization. That's from Sergio Marchi. He brought wonderful tidings to a US business coalition. Then he identified areas that are "ripe for liberalization." So he calls privatization "liberalization."

"In a subsequent interview, Marchi claimed that Canada would not jeopardize public health and education in the negotiations. Yet according to the Washington Trade Daily, in his speech Marchi specifically named 'teaching and education' as areas for expanded coverage." What's he saying there? On one hand, we want to modernize workplaces and we want private partnerships. Then what do we get from Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals? "No, we don't want to do any of those things. We don't want our province to grow, to prosper, to create more jobs." At least their federal cousins are open to some of these suggestions.

The Speaker: Responses? The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: I'm pleased to respond to the members' comments—I guess London West, London-Fanshawe, St Paul's and Niagara.

Just to perhaps clarify, because the member for London West—I may not have explained it properly. In terms of the government moving more slowly, when asked why the environment is all screwed up and why the transfer of land ambulances is in a mess and why Agricorn is in a mess and why the jail situation is in a mess, the auditor said that in his opinion these are probably examples where the bureaucracy had a plan for implementing this properly, and because, I gather, the Premier is driven by ideology or something, he just simply overrode the bureaucracy and there's the problem.

We've got enormous problems in the environment. The land ambulance transfer is going very badly. He pointed out some significant problems in the corrections services, and the Agricorn board was investing in things that I gather were not only high risk but were illegal.

On the privatization one, the 407 is your best example. I guarantee you that the users of the 407 have been ripped off big time. The government when they sold it said, "Listen, the rates on the 407 will go up in total in 15 years perhaps three cents a kilometre." They've already gone up three cents a kilometre, and if you don't pay those tolls you don't get your licence renewed. In my opinion they are paying tolls twice what they should be because Mike Harris wanted a cash grab. The deal closed the day the election was called and the poor 407 users are paying the price now, and will forever.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Maves: It's a pleasure for me to rise and join the debate on Bill 147, the Employment Standards Act, 2000. There has been quite a bit made so far in this debate about the consultation process surrounding the Employ-

ment Standards Act reform. I remember when I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour in our first mandate, from 1995 to 1999, at that point in time there were quite a number of people both in business and in labour, and actually in the bureaucracy, the civil servants who work for us at the Ministry of Labour, talking about how outdated the Employment Standards Act was and how outdated employment standards were in the province of Ontario. Indeed the act had been brought in, I believe, in 1968 and had never really substantially been updated, and they were engaging in a process even then, well before 1999, to look at how we might modify the Employment Standards Act.

Part of that goes to the fact that there's a totally changing nature of work in Ontario today, and throughout the world, in fact. In the old days, in the 1950s, a lot of folks marched off to plants and punched clocks. It was very routine and everyone went off to their own workplace. There were very similar work experiences throughout Ontario and throughout the developed world. As we marched along in time, those typical workplaces changed rather dramatically. The number of people, for instance, in the past decade who have created their own businesses, are operating their own businesses out of their homes, are working out of their homes for another employer on a piecemeal basis or on a contract basis doing computer work or some other type of work like that, has grown enormously.

In fact, a lot of the economic growth—as the chamber empties at 10 to 6 on a Thursday—a lot of the economic development, a lot of the job changes that have happened over the years require an updating of the act, require us to look at these standards, require us to look and see if the proper flexibility is there so that the growth in self-employment, the growth of work at home and contract work will fit in and continue to flourish, and we continue to have the growth we've had over the past few years in that sector with a more flexible Employment Standards Act. That's what we embarked on in the previous mandate, when I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour. That's what this minister has continued down the road on since his appointment in 1999 as the Minister of Labour.

They talk about not enough consultation. It seems to me that with every bill I've ever been involved with since 1995, the comment from across the way is, "There wasn't enough consultation." The problem with that is that the facts speak for themselves. Between 1995 and 1999, the government sat more hours in this Legislative Assembly than any government in the history of Ontario—I'm not sure about this fact, but I think any government in the history of Canada, in any province or even our federal government. That's how many hours of debate on bills we had in this Legislative Assembly from 1995 to 1999. Yet on every single bill we passed, the members opposite complained and shrieked, "Not enough time for consultation."

In fact, that government between 1995 and 1999 had more hours of public hearings on bills than any govern-

ment in the history of Ontario, than any government, I believe, in the history of Canada. That's how much consultation we did, but did you hear the members opposite stand up and say at that point in time, "Congratulations. You've done enough consultation on the bill. You've heard the consultation and we've seen you've done the consultation; we acknowledge it. Go ahead and pass that bill"? No. Never. They never did that. Never once would they say that we had enough consultation on any bill. So the refrain again from the other House is pretty much—

A noise interrupted the proceedings.

Mr Maves: Something is happening here, Speaker, and I have no idea what it is, but I'm going to just toss this over there. We're not supposed to have electronic equipment in this Legislature. That's an old rule, but the workplace is changing. In fact that goes to my point: the workplace is changing. A lot of members think I had indigestion there, but it wasn't.

1750

The workplace is changing. I remember that even in this Legislature, in this place, we have our own standards. There was quite a bit of debate in the last legislative sitting where we talked about maybe introducing electronic equipment into this place. In the old days, you obviously wouldn't bring a typewriter in here, but today some people think we should be able to bring our computer notebooks here and quietly do our work. Maybe this is an example of why we shouldn't. Even with our best intentions, those people with electronic equipment don't remain quiet.

I thought it was an instructive example, actually. I would like to say I planned that, but I didn't.

As for as the members opposite once again raising this issue of not enough debate, not enough consultation, not enough time to look at this—poppycok. If we go back to the previous mandate, we were doing consultation then, and the minister did some more consultation on a white paper and now we've had many hours of legislative debate in here.

There was a time-honoured tradition in this place, which some older than I remember much better than I, where the House leaders of the three parties would get together and talk about the process of bills through the Legislature. They would work it out between themselves, that while members opposite may disagree with the bill, they would give it a certain amount of debate, and eventually the bill would pass through and there would be agreement between the House leaders.

With the NDP government between 1990 and 1995—I confess it started when we and the Liberals were in opposition—there seemed to be quite a bit of gnashing of teeth and banging of heads. Quite often the NDP government invoked closure on bills. They would pass motions in this House, and debate them for a day, to limit the debate on a bill. They did that many times. In fact they did not have a lot of public committees and standing committees on their bills. Some of the most controversial bills they passed, like the social contract, which went against every principle the NDP has stood for since they

started—the sanctity of the collective bargaining agreement—they totally went against that. They had no public hearings on that—none.

It's really difficult for us to sit across the aisle, knowing our record of how much in the way of public hearings we've had as a government, how many hours we've sat as a Legislative Assembly debating bills. I've been here until midnight on many nights and my colleagues the same. I can see tired nods now as we sit on this side of the House fully until 6 o'clock, or until 9:30 most nights of the week. We've experienced just how much more this government has added to the time of debating bills in this Legislature, the time of having bills go through the public committee process.

To sit and listen to this time after time actually shows—the people at home should look at this and say, "Why can't the members opposite debate the contents and the merits of the bill? Why are they always on about process?" I'm not necessarily arguing this, but some would argue that they don't know the contents of the bill, that they don't really understand the merits of the bill.

They look at themselves as opposition, "Therefore, I must oppose whatever comes up. If I don't have time to necessarily get into the nitty-gritty of the bill, if I don't have time to necessarily understand the bill, then I have

to have something to complain about to the government. So I'll complain about a Provincial Auditor's report that has nothing to do with this bill, or I'll complain about some spending or some taxation policy or something that has nothing to do with the bill." Quite often, they'll complain about procedure: not enough time to debate in this Legislature, not enough public hearings, and so it goes. It's too bad.

The public should look at these types of debates and say to the members opposite, "Why don't you guys talk about the details and the merits or lack thereof of a certain bill? Why do you go on about so many other topics?"

It seems to me that, as opposition members, you're just trying to fill time, you're just trying to oppose for the sake of opposing, and that's too bad. I hope that as we move forward in the coming years, that attitude from across the aisle changes and we can sincerely begin to work better together as an entire government of the people, to do better and better bills for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 11 December 2000

Lundi 11 décembre 2000



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 11 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 11 décembre 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HYDRO RATES

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It is a familiar and frightening pattern. First, the price of gas and diesel fuel skyrockets and Ontarians get gouged at every pump in the province, and our provincial government does nothing but make excuses for the big oil companies. Then the province allows natural gas, used for heating your home, to go up 45% without even passing comment. It will cost the average Ontarian \$500 more to heat their home, and the province says it's OK. Now, hoards of door-to-door electricity con artists are descending on Ontarians, inducing them to sign long-term contracts, contracts that even kick back rebates to their brokers. The power brokers offer the consumer nothing but fine print that always costs the consumer more.

This government refuses to help Ontario consumers, whether they drive a car, heat their homes or turn on a light switch. Our most basic needs have been sold off to unscrupulous door-to-door hucksters who will make millions of dollars at the expense of hard-working Ontarians, and this government shamefully allows it to happen in complete silence and complicity.

To everyone listening, enjoy your Christmas lights, for this may be the last year you can afford to turn them on. God help the people of Ontario.

SICKNESS BENEFITS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise today on behalf of one of my constituents, who has advised me of her concerns with the federal employment insurance sickness benefits. My constituent recently underwent surgery with a recovery period of three months, at which time a further procedure had to be performed, causing her to be off work for several more months.

Federal employment insurance sickness benefits are only payable for a maximum of 15 weeks. As this person works in an occupation that does not have any private sick benefits, she will not have any income after 15 weeks. My constituent has worked for 27 years and paid into employment insurance for all that time. Yet, when she needs help due to sickness, she is told that she can

only receive assistance for 15 weeks. My constituent wants to know why the federal government has extended maternity benefits to 12 months but has not extended the time off for sickness benefits. She stated to me that she did not choose to be sick and does not understand why such limited restrictions are placed on sickness benefits without any regard for the circumstances.

On behalf of my constituent, I wanted to bring this matter to the attention of this House.

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Recently I had the opportunity to meet with Dr Richard Van Loon, the president of Carleton University in Ottawa. We discussed issues facing universities over the next decade.

Over the course of the next 10 years, universities will be facing an unprecedented number of retiring professors. This is the result of the large group that was hired during the baby boom that entered university in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These teachers have now reached retirement age.

These same schools are facing the so-called echo boom. This is the large number of children of baby boomers who are now reaching university age.

In addition, these schools are facing the so-called double cohort in the year 2003. This is the year the two senior classes will be graduating at the same time from secondary school.

The problem is fairly simple. There are going to be far too many students versus too few professors. The universities in my community are very concerned about the fact that the necessary resources are not being allocated to deal with the looming problem. Dr Van Loon was appreciative of the efforts of this government to provide capital funding necessary for bricks and mortar. At the same time, both he and many others in the post-secondary community are concerned about the need to increase provincial funding to keep pace with the expansion. To put it in perspective, the number of faculty that will be needed in the near future will exceed the total number that are currently teaching at Ontario universities.

In conclusion, this government needs to increase operating funds so that universities can start to hire faculty now that are going to be needed in the very near future.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Last week, the Honourable Dan Newman and I visited the Scarborough Hospital to present a cheque for \$6,062,309 from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. This money will be invested in front-line patient care to ensure that the residents of Scarborough have better access to quality hospital services. Those patients who need specialized hospital services such as renal dialysis, orthopaedic implants, cardiac services and level 2 neonatal care will be able to access these services where they are needed, close to home. The Scarborough Hospital's General and Grace divisions will be able to perform more procedures next year than were performed last year.

Our government has invested more than \$22 billion in health care money for the benefit of Ontarians in 2000-01.

I want to take this opportunity to particularly thank the Scarborough Hospital community—the doctors, nurses, administrative staff, board of governors and volunteers—for the tremendous care and support they give daily to the many constituents of Scarborough Centre and beyond.

AGRICORP

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): In this Legislature on October 2, the Minister of Agriculture said, when it was found that actions had been taken with money at Agricornp that should not have been taken, "We immediately asked the Provincial Auditor to look at the matter." The Minister said he called in the auditor.

On November 30, in public accounts, the Provincial Auditor made it very clear that this was not at all the case. He said that Agricornp was selected on the initiative of his office. When I asked whether he had been asked by anyone to look into what was going on at Agricornp, the answer was a resounding but simple no. In fact, when the Provincial Auditor released his report, he stated, "In a very unusual move by my office, we had to take action to ensure that monies were not inappropriately used."

The Minister of Agriculture has compromised his credibility in this Legislature.

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Secondly, the interest owed on the crop insurance fund had been transferred to pay for administrative expenses. The Premier acknowledged that this action was inappropriate. He went on to say that the money has been returned with interest.

The auditor also states that the bond and its associated losses were inappropriately moved from the general fund to the Ontario crop insurance fund. "Transferred" is in the past tense. After the matter was brought to light, the fund was reimbursed. This is absolutely appalling.

I asked the auditor about the legality of this move, and he made it very clear that this action was legislatively prohibited. He said that the transfer, if it had been completed, would have been illegal. It's very clear that the transfer was indeed completed and therefore was

illegal. It does not matter whether this money was reimbursed. It does not change the fact that this was an illegal activity. You cannot just say everything was made better by going back and trying to fix things. It was illegal in the first place. The Premier agreed the OPP should be called in, and I firmly believe the time has come to call in the OPP.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): One hundred and thirteen days: that's how long 1,250 Mine Mill/CAW members have been out on strike in my community. One hundred and thirteen days since workers withdrew their labour after formally rejecting the long list of concessions demanded by Falconbridge during collective bargaining. One hundred and thirteen days since the company hired a southern Ontario security firm to surveil picketers on tape and in person 24 hours a day; since the company made two court applications to severely curtail picketing; since the company upped the ante with new recent demands which have now led to a formal charge of bad-faith bargaining by the union to the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

One hundred and thirteen days since the law in this province, courtesy of the Mike Harris government, allowed Falconbridge to bring in scab labour to take the work and jobs of miners who are legitimately on strike. Since the company has used scab labour from day one, there's been no need and no incentive for them to negotiate. That's how it is when workers have the deck stacked against them.

There didn't have to be a strike. Indeed, there wouldn't have been a strike if the Harris government had kept the NDP anti-scab law in place. When employers knew they couldn't use scabs, they got down to the business of negotiating an agreement: no choice, no scabs, no delays. That's how it should be in the province of Ontario again.

We need to ban scab labour in Ontario for my friends at Mine Mill/CAW and for every other worker who is undermined every day by employers who use scabs during strikes and lockouts in this province. There's no need for delay. The time is now. It's time to ban scabs from workplaces in this province.

NIAGARA ESCARPMENT

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I rise today to tell the House about some items of interest pertaining to Ontario's Niagara Escarpment and the Niagara Escarpment Commission. First of all, I ask the Legislature to welcome Mark Frawley, the commission's new director, who is in the gallery today.

Members in the Niagara Escarpment area will already be familiar with the In Focus document. This is the initial material assembled to provide background for the current review of the Niagara Escarpment plan. I understand the Minister of Natural Resources is now considering

establishing final terms of reference for the review. Accordingly, the draft terms of reference identify a selected number of emerging issues on the escarpment, rather than revisiting the fundamental principles that are sound.

In my constituency there is certainly the feeling that the Niagara Escarpment plan and the Niagara Escarpment Commission are doing an outstanding job for us. The commission just this week published new pamphlets, like so, in its Explorer series. We are very pleased that these tourism publications cover a vast portion of the escarpment in our area. I am encouraged that the Niagara Escarpment Commission has long recognized the value of the escarpment as a tourist resource. In my constituency, the escarpment is appreciated not only as an environmental treasure, but also as a foundation for our economic development.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I want to comment on the state of confusion around electrical power in Ontario. It's another fine mess that Mike Harris has gotten us into.

I remember when we passed the legislation that launched this. We were promised lower rates. We were told that the debt would be off the province's books and we would see some brand new generation in the province of Ontario. It is without a question the most screwed up, confusing mess that we've seen in a long while here. The debt is still on the books, as the auditor pointed out, and it's growing—up by \$500 million this year. We've seen no reduction in the rates. We will be dealing with a tax bill this week that delays again the implementation of this legislation.

As my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence pointed out, we have companies across the province purporting to sell people electricity with no idea when this is going to be launched. I think there are 40 companies out there right now. The municipal electrical utilities thought they had the agreement from the government to do something and they spent millions of dollars. The government introduced the bill and then they pulled the bill back. The Provincial Auditor was forced to step in and point out that the way the government was accounting for this was incorrect, and forced the government to put the debt back on the books.

It is a mess—a huge mess. The Premier owes the people of the province some clarity on this bill. We hope we will get it soon, because right now it is mass confusion.

LLOYD DENNIS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Tomorrow, Tuesday, December 12 at 4:30, the Honourable Hilary Weston, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, will present 25 citizens with the prestigious Order of Ontario. The Order of Ontario recognizes and honours those who have

enriched the lives of others by attaining the highest standards of excellence in achievement in their respective fields.

We are proud that Orillia resident Dr Lloyd Dennis will be on hand to receive the Order of Ontario. Born in the bush, where his mother cooked in a logging camp, he had a transient and lonely childhood, attending a large number of rural schools in the Muskoka-Parry Sound district of Ontario.

Leaving school at the age of 16, he went to work until old enough for military service. Lloyd became an officer at the tender age of 19 and served with the Canadian paratroops. After the war, he returned to school as a married adult. There he attained his high school diploma, certification as a teacher and, subsequently, two degrees from the University of Toronto. Dr Dennis served in Toronto as a grade teacher, a science teacher and a consulting teacher in social studies, and as a school principal.

In 1965 he was invited to serve the Ministry of Education as adviser to the deputy minister. Almost immediately, he was appointed secretary and research director for the committee on aims and objectives of education in Ontario. A short time later, he was appointed co-chair of the commission, with Mr Justice Emmett Hall of the Supreme Court of Canada. This work resulted in the report on education called *Living and Learning*, popularly known as the Hall-Dennis report. After the report's publication, Lloyd was named as official spokesperson, meeting a huge number of audiences in Ontario and across the country.

In 1969 he resigned from the ministry to become the director of education for the Leeds-Grenville board of education, a position he held until 1979, when he decided, as he puts it, to become a "free spirit."

Dr Dennis was the creator and writer of the *Children's Page*, which ran for six years with the old Toronto Telegram newspaper. He had a number of books to his credit, the most recent of which was *The Learning Circus*, an engaging tale of the life of an educator. In addition, his book *Marching Orders* has just emerged from its third printing. Popularly acclaimed, it is the story of his early life.

Lloyd has received a large number of awards for his work in education, including two doctorates from Canadian universities. In 1979 he was made an officer of the Order of Canada in recognition of his service to education. Recently, he was given a lifetime award by the Toronto Sun for his service to education.

VISITORS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to introduce to the House a group of visitors from Oakwood Collegiate, who are very interested in the future of education in Ontario. They are being led by Mr Tom Nanasi. Let's welcome them.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our friends.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO VQA ONLY ACT, 2000 LOI DE 2000 SUR L'EXCLUSIVITÉ DE LA VQA DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Chudleigh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 160, An Act supporting Ontario wines by serving only Ontario VQA certified wines at functions of the Government of Ontario / Projet de loi 160, Loi visant à contribuer au succès des vins de l'Ontario en exigeant du gouvernement de l'Ontario qu'il ne serve que du vin certifié par la VQA de l'Ontario à ses réceptions.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. The member for a short statement.

1350

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Although most governments in Ontario have always done this, I think it's time that it becomes a regulation in this place.

The Ontario Vintners Quality Alliance, VQA, is an independent alliance of wineries, grape growers and provincial liquor regulators and several academic, hospitality and research institutions. It has been promoting and maintaining the standards of Ontario's wine since 1988.

With the VQA system, Ontario joins other leading wine-producing countries in developing a body of regulations in order to set high standards for its wine.

Unfortunately, the leading European wine-producing countries have continued to discriminate against Ontario wines by disallowing imports. The Ontario VQA Only Act would serve to promote the fine quality and standards of these wines produced right here at home, in Ontario. By serving only Ontario VQA-approved wines at all official government of Ontario functions, we would demonstrate our continued support for made-in-Ontario wine.

CANADIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM ACT, 2000 LOI DE 2000 SUR L'HYMNE NATIONAL DU CANADA

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to provide for the singing of O Canada / Projet de loi 161, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative pour prévoir que soit chanté le Ô Canada.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have copies of the national anthem in French and English and I wonder if the pages could hand it out while I introduce it.

It is certainly my privilege and honour to ask that this Legislature, as a custom, sing O Canada at the beginning

of every week of the Legislative Assembly session on Mondays, as is the custom in Alberta and as is the custom at the federal Legislature in Ottawa.

I think it's only fitting, since all of us here have such great love for this country and represent it as elected officials, that we do our part to remind all Ontarians that we love this country and respect it. I think it's only fitting that we sing it once a week, and that we also follow this government's lead. As you know, they've passed a bill whereby students across this province will be singing, and are singing, O Canada. So I think if students are singing it, there's no reason why we as legislators cannot sing our national anthem.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to move to second and third reading right now on Mr Colle's bill and we can all break out into song and sing O Canada today.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to move to second and third reading of the bill? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Ms Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 / Projet de loi 162, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The purpose of the bill is to ban the use of scab labour in Ontario. It restores those sections of the NDP government's Bill 40 that prevent employers from using other workers to replace those legitimately on strike or locked out. It forces employers to sit down and bargain collective agreements because they know no one else can take the jobs of striking workers. It protects management employees from employer reprisal when they refuse the work of bargaining unit employees on strike or lockout.

I'm introducing this bill on behalf of Mine Mill/CAW workers in my community, who have now been on strike for 113 days because Falconbridge is using scabs. It's also for every other Ontario worker who has been undermined by their employer in the same way.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday,

December 11, and Tuesday, December 12, 2000, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

REFERRAL OF BILL 159

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that pursuant to standing order 72(a), the order for second reading of Bill 159, An Act respecting Personal Health Information and related matters, be discharged and the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question today is for the Minister of Health. It is regarding your Big Brother bill.

Minister, you understand that when people go in and see their doctors, they tell them things they wouldn't disclose to the most intimate acquaintances, things they wouldn't even tell their husbands or wives. They talk about things like depression, sexual orientation, abortion and a variety of other very personal subjects. It is absolutely essential that nothing whatsoever be seen to come between a doctor and a patient, and that we do everything we possibly can to preserve that sense of confidentiality.

Madam Minister, your bill has already been heavily criticized by both doctors and the privacy commissioner, and it's just newly born. One of the things the OMA and doctors are telling us is that your bill is going to undermine the relationship between doctors and patients. Will you do the honourable thing right now: put this stillborn bill out of its misery and withdraw it?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I am very pleased that the Leader of the Opposition has raised the issue of this legislation which, as he knows and as I already indicated on Thursday, was going to move directly to committee, because this is a non-partisan bill. In fact, it will take the resources of this entire House to ensure that the personal health information of people in this province is secure in its collection, its use and its disclosure.

1400

I have a letter here from the Ontario Medical Association, dated today, where they say:

"In the spirit of ongoing mutual co-operation ... the OMA looks forward to continuing to meet with government representatives to resolve issues related to the legislation.... The most fundamental aspect of this confidence is the ability of patients to give their physician full disclosure of their personal health information without concern for its privacy and confidentiality.

"We are particularly confident in the government's assurances, in that it has chosen to move the legislative process directly to the committee stage, thereby continuing the consultations dating back to 1996."

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: I have a better solution: withdraw the bill. Start over from square one.

Madam Minister, you have been studying this issue since 1996. You, yourself, admit you have received over 400 written submissions. I can't understand how you got it so wrong so early.

On Friday, Dr Albert Schumacher of the Ontario Medical Association said, "This will give the government of Ontario full access to your medical records. They can use this information any way they want. This will undermine patient care. Physicians will no longer be able to guarantee to their patients the confidentiality of their records."

Last week, the privacy commissioner said—and she hasn't had an opportunity to review this fully, so we're very much looking forward to whatever else she has to offer—"We question the scope of disclosures of personal health information that will be permitted without consent."

Your bill, in its present form, is going to constitute a real impediment to Ontarians seeking quality health care in Ontario. You have scared the heck out of them with this bill. The privacy commissioner says it's a bad bill. Doctors say it's a bad bill. I expect very shortly that our nurses are going to say this is a bad bill. Why don't you do the right thing in the circumstances, withdraw this bill and start over from square one?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition may say, I again want to quote from Dr Schumacher's letter of December 11—today—where he states:

"We look forward to continuing meaningful discussion of this legislation and be assured of the OMA's ongoing support of government's health privacy legislation."

He indicates, "We appreciate your offer to have your officials meet with us this week to begin discussions around making revisions to the legislation in a way that makes it responsive to the patients of this province and balancing the advantages of electronic data management with personal privacy."

Furthermore, I'd like to quote from Frances Lankin, because you had a chance, I would say to the Leader of

the Opposition; your party had a chance. On January 19, 1995, Frances Lankin said, "Many governments had the opportunity to introduce health information privacy legislation. The privacy commissioner has been urging that for a long time. In our government, the commissioner urged me a lot. It never made it in"—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: I would suggest that the minister turn to her left now and seek the opinion of her predecessor. This is what he said in this House back in 1995:

"We should not, must not, cannot and will not change the relationship and the confidentiality of patients' records with respect to any public disclosure of those records. That information must be kept confidential between the physician and the patient."

It's not often that I agree with Jim Wilson, but on that one he was bang on.

You and I have a fundamental difference of opinion. You believe that a person's medical record is the property of the government. I believe that a person's medical record is their own property and the only time governments get access to it is with our consent to it. That's the fundamental difference of opinion we have here now. Ontarians understand this. That's why they are recoiling with horror when they learn the news about this bill.

Madam Minister, do the right thing, do the honourable thing, do the kind of thing that's going to help us protect health care, and withdraw this bill.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We don't disagree with the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, we have an opportunity in this House, after 20 years of inaction and really a lack of courage on the part of governments, to undertake an examination of the protection of personal health information, to work together co-operatively and ensure that confidential patient information will continue to be protected. There is ample opportunity to do so. We don't agree with you, and you and I need to make sure it happens.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr McGuinty: The second question is for the Attorney General. Minister, I want to ask you about your Bill 155. That's a law that's going to enable you to seize property from people you suspect—period, full stop. There will be no need for a conviction; no need for even a charge to be laid. As part of the package of powers you're giving yourself, you're giving yourself the right to collect personal information on people you suspect. "Personal information" is defined for us. It says in your bill we'll go to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to see how they define "personal information." I went to that act, and it says personal information includes "information relating to the medical, psychiatric and psychological history" of the individual in question.

This is one giant step too far. Can you tell us what gives you the right to collect personal medical information on Ontarians?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): If the member opposite is referring to a section of the bill that was introduced on Thursday, that section is unnecessary and was almost immediately withdrawn, being unnecessary.

If one looks at the organized crime bill, Bill 155, the process there, very importantly and intentionally, is a court order process. Some have said the police will have this power or the Attorney General will have this power—totally inaccurate. All of the processes set out very intentionally, after consulting around the world, are through court order through the Superior Court. The Attorney General's lawyers would have to go to court with respect to each of these matters and satisfy a judge that it would be appropriate for the court to order seizing and freezing. Then there would be due process again with respect to whether or not there should be forfeiture.

Mr McGuinty: The minister obviously hasn't read his own bill. I'll read a part of it to him right now. Under the section entitled "Personal information," subsection 19(1), it says, "The Attorney General may collect personal information"—and we now know that includes medical records—"for any of the following purposes:

"1. To determine whether a proceeding should be commenced under this act."

This has nothing to do with going before a judge. You're saying if you're thinking about starting a proceeding under this act, you can get access to medical records. I want to tell you, Minister, J. Edgar Hoover would be very proud of you. He collected a lot of information. He tapped a lot of phones and he opened up a lot of files on a lot of people over a lot of years. That's exactly the kind of scenario this opens you up to right now through this bill.

This is Ontario. It's the 21st century. We believe people here have certain inalienable rights. One of those is not to have their personal and confidential medical information laid bare to you or any other minister in your government. Will you now do the honourable thing? Will you withdraw your J. Edgar Hoover provision from this bill?

Hon Mr Flaherty: As the Leader of the Opposition may not appreciate, organized crime is a very serious issue in the western world. We have consulted around the world with respect to this initiative. It is the leading legislation of its type in Canada, and I expect other provinces will be exercising their constitutional jurisdiction dealing with property and civil rights, dealing with public security. Indeed, the federal Minister of Justice has indicated to the provinces she welcomes the fact that the provinces are going to act within their own areas of jurisdiction.

1410

With respect to the specific point raised by the Leader of the Opposition, as I've indicated, the process outlined in Bill 155 with respect to organized crime deals with applications to court and not unilateral action by the Attorney General.

Mr McGuinty: I'm going to suggest to the minister one more time that he read his own legislation. It is perfectly clear in section 19 under the section entitled "Personal information" that you can go out there and collect confidential medical records if you are interested in beginning a proceeding. It has nothing whatsoever to do with going to a court and seeking consent of a judge or formally applying for approval from a judge to collect confidential medical records. You have this authority. It is unprecedented in the history of this province. How can you, the person over there who is charged with upholding the law, fail to respect it? There should be a law in Ontario, one that we all uphold, that says nobody gets access to our confidential medical records unless we agree to give consent to releasing that information.

I ask you one more time: now that you've been fully briefed on your own law, by me, right here, will you withdraw the J. Edgar Hoover provision found in your bill?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I'd like to compliment the Leader of the Opposition on his humility, but I can't, given the attitude that he expresses here.

As I think I have made clear twice now, there are no provisions for administrative seizure, administrative action, in Bill 155. The entire concept of the bill is to proceed through court orders, and that's intentional after we consulted around the world to make sure that we stayed away from some of the problems that have been experienced in other jurisdictions in this very important area.

I invite the member to study the bill further. He'll see that it is innovative legislation that will put Ontario in a leadership position with respect to fighting organized crime in Ontario.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Last week we learned that your government was routinely sharing personal information about young offenders with organizations outside the government, something that is clearly a breach of the criminal law of Canada. When I asked the Premier about this, he said that you were going to conduct an internal review of how this could have happened. After he said that, we learned that the person who is going to conduct the internal review is the deputy minister of corrections, and we have since learned that the deputy minister of corrections is the former president of one of these outside organizations that's been getting the leaked information. This is something akin to putting the fox in charge of the henhouse when you're trying to figure out what's happening to the hens. It's a direct conflict of interest.

Do you believe that it is acceptable in this situation, where your government repeatedly has breached the criminal law with respect to private information about young offenders, to put somebody who is connected with the breach in charge of the investigation?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I refer the question to the acting Minister of Correctional Services.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): There are two investigations going on at the present time. Of course, there is the investigation that is being undertaken by the Deputy Attorney General to look into the causes and effects and the facts around the breach or the alleged breach of the naming of some young offenders with regard to the Brookside correctional centre.

I asked the deputy minister to look into the various policies and procedures that we have with regard to the protection of the confidentiality and the living within the Young Offenders Act so that we can be certain that this kind or another kind of breach of the Young Offenders Act will not take place in the future.

Mr Hampton: That is exactly the problem, because one of the outside organizations that has been getting this protected information is an organization called Operation Springboard. The deputy minister of corrections, who you have put in charge of the review, is the former president of the outfit called Operation Springboard. There couldn't be a clearer conflict of interest.

This issue has already been raised with your ministry. The president of the probation officers' association contacted the deputy minister of corrections about this issue back on November 17 and said there is clearly a breach of criminal law, that we shouldn't be doing this. Do you know what the president of the probation officers got back from the former minister's office and from the deputy minister's office? They got a note saying, "Don't ever raise this issue again." And now you're going to tell us that this same deputy minister can conduct an impartial and reliable review of breaches of criminal law that have been going on in your government. What else do you expect us to believe?

Hon Mr Sterling: As I said before, the deputy minister is doing an internal review to be certain that all the people who are involved in handling young offenders understand what the obligations under the Young Offenders Act should be and how they should execute their particular performance with regard to the Young Offenders Act.

I can't see anything wrong with our revisiting with our employees—and, I might add, with volunteers; there are many volunteers involved in young offenders' programs across Ontario—the particular procedures we have to ensure that privacy is kept with regard to these youth offenders. Frankly, this is outside the purview of any kind of formal investigation which requires any police action.

Mr Hampton: This is about breaches of criminal law. This is about this government once again taking private information about people that is protected by the criminal law of Canada and sharing it with outside organizations that have no right to get it. Now you're saying that the very deputy minister who presided over this, who told a

civil servant to shut up and not mention this issue again, is somehow going to conduct a reliable internal review.

Let me tell you, Minister, I know why the former minister stepped down. The former minister knew that the ministry, the deputy minister and the assistant deputy minister were this far off the track, and he stepped down so he can't be questioned about it. The point is, when civil servants within the ministry have been told to shut up about this issue, is it your view that the very people who told them to keep their mouths shut can now be trusted to conduct a proper review and to ensure that people's legal rights aren't broken even again by your government?

Hon Mr Sterling: I'm not sure the allegations the third party leader makes are correct or accurate. I would ask him to have the particular probation official make those to me formally, as to what was said to my deputy minister. If you would provide me with his name etc, I would be glad to look into it and discuss it with my deputy minister.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Earlier today my colleague from Nickel Belt introduced a private member's bill to ban the use of replacement workers—scabs—in Ontario. You ought to know by now that there is no better recipe to prolong a labour dispute, to cause a flare of tempers on the picket line, than the use of scab labour. You ought to know that. We have seen that borne out in the increasing number of days lost to strikes since your government reopened the labour law and welcomed scabs back into the province.

There is no greater disincentive to sitting down at the bargaining table than a company being able to use scabs, and there is no greater guarantee of lasting damage to labour relationships than the use of scabs. Will you support the member for Nickel Belt's bill and ban the use of scabs in Ontario before this leads to a more serious situation?

1420

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): The leader of the third party makes some allegations in there that I'm not sure are correct. If your suggestion is that under this administration compared to previous administrations we have more strikes, the answer to that is that we don't. We have a 96% settlement rate in the union sector, in the private sector, with respect to today and in future. If your allegation is that there are more lost days to strikes in total, that's not true either. It's substantially the same under your administration compared to our administration.

It seems to me that you've built this argument out of a house of cards. None of it is accurate, so therefore you've jumped to this conclusion that ultimately, then, the legislation is causing this. Well, there's no cause and effect. We're settling strikes at the same rate and there are no more lost days than there used to be, so it seems to me

you're building this argument on some rather faulty foundations. If you want to challenge those, I accept your challenge; just provide me the information. But my ministry is telling me that it's substantially the same under this administration as when you were in power.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): If I might, if you checked with your ministry you would find that in 1993, the first year our anti-scab bill operated, there were only 81 work stoppages in the province of Ontario. That, since the ministry began collecting statistics in 1975, was the lowest number ever. They've grown since then under your government.

But the question was, Minister, will you support my bill to ban scab labour? In the gallery today we have a number of Mine Mill/CAW workers who've now been on strike in my community for over 113 days, and they have dealt with scab labour first hand. From day one of this strike Falconbridge has used scab labour, first at the smelter and now in limited use underground. From day one there's been no incentive for Falconbridge to bargain because they know they can use scabs to take on the work of those who are on the picket line and can still maintain production.

Minister, if Falconbridge was banned from using scab labour they'd be forced to the bargaining table tomorrow and there would be an end to this labour dispute and there would be no chance that there would be violence on the picket lines from people who are becoming so desperate. I ask you again today: you have the power to ban scab labour in the province of Ontario. Will you do that by supporting my private member's bill?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Again I want to attack the basic foundation of your argument. You suggest there were 89 work stoppages in 1993. We know full well that today there are far more collective agreements being negotiated because there are far more people working. There are far more collective agreements being negotiated because there's more prosperity in this province. Sure, the whole number may have been lower when you were in office, but nobody was working so of course it was going to be lower. When we're in office you've got 800,000 more jobs, you've got more people working, so as a percentage, 96% of the collective agreements in the province are negotiated without a strike or a lockout—no difference at all. Whether you've got banned workers or not-banned workers, collective agreements or no collective agreements, whether you've got lost days or no lost days, the simple fact is the same: it's exactly identical under both administrations.

Interruption.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. We will have a five-minute recess as we clear the galleries.

The House recessed from 1424 to 1429.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Labour as well. I think earlier we saw an indication of the frustration that is in the minds and hearts of the people of my community. After four and a

half months, the situation is getting worse. It's getting worse because the company isn't coming to the table to talk. All you have to do is read the newspaper headlines, which tell you that very soon someone in my community is going to be injured or worse. There isn't anyone in this House who wants that to happen.

Minister, this is not a time for cheap theatrics. This is not a time when we try to use the emotions of people to score cheap political points. This is a very serious time in my community's existence. This strike has had a very negative impact on my community.

I don't think there's any other way to try to get talks moving again than for you as the Minister of Labour to directly intervene in this situation. Although it's highly unusual, I believe you saw a demonstration of our frustration, of the frustration of the workers in this community, of the frustration of the community.

Minister, I'm asking, will you commit to personally intervening in this situation in order to allow a ray of hope for our community and the striking workers?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I will get to the question, just to let you know.

The difficulty is that in private sector negotiations, unions and corporations, companies, negotiate separately. We provide mediation only upon request. So if either party requests mediation, we provide that mediation, ready and very willing. We're very open about it. Many of the private sectors out there take us up on the mediation.

As far as my personally getting involved, it's very unusual that the Minister of Labour would be involved in a private sector situation. It's very unusual they would be involved in a public sector situation simply because we at the Ministry of Labour are supposed to be providing non-partisan mediation advice to both sides.

I'm not averse to suggesting, if there could be some solution to this, becoming involved. That's not a suggestion I would be opposed to, but it's certainly something we would have to consider fully before I gave you an undertaking one way or the other.

Mr Bartolucci: Minister, I think you understand the severity of this situation. There's absolutely no question about that. The situation in my community is grave. I understand the position that you're in as the Minister of Labour, but I hope that you would understand the position my community is in, that these striking workers are in and that the entire community feels. But there is no way of articulating this other than to say that we need intervention. We need to sit down together. We need to try to find some common ground where we can get both sides back to the table. The alternative is not acceptable to you, to me, to the community, to anyone.

Minister, again, will you commit, please, as the Minister of Labour, with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and me, to sit down and try to see if there is some common ground? If we don't talk, nothing will happen. If we talk, maybe something will happen. My community needs something to happen.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think I can speak on behalf of the Minister of Mines and myself. If you believe there's anything we can offer to help facilitate this, we will be more than happy to, if you would like to meet with me and the minister after question period or some time today and sit down and give us a strategy on what you think is the best approach. I am very confident, as a government, nobody wants to see a strike. Nobody wants to see them out on the picket line. We would much prefer to see negotiated settlements take place, and we do 96% of the time.

But if you're asking me, as Minister of Labour, and the Minister of Mines to sit down with you and see if we can work out a strategy that will bring the parties together, we would never be opposed to that and we would be very happy to do such a thing.

DRAINAGE PROGRAMS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This year you initiated a review of the drainage program run by your ministry, and the results of that review are not yet known.

As you know, the municipalities are now finishing up their pre-budgetary discussions and are anxious to get an answer on any proposed changes in the amount of funding they will receive for their drainage programs or for their drainage superintendents.

Minister, what amount of drainage funding can municipalities expect, and when will you make this announcement?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I want to thank the member for Simcoe North for the important question. Drainage is a very important issue in rural Ontario, both for the province's farmers and for the municipalities that administer the drainage program.

I know that municipalities in the province are anxious to know what the drainage allocation will be, and I'm pleased to report that letters to about 200 municipalities that qualify for the program are being sent out today. Municipalities are being informed that the percentage of the allocation for drainage maintenance and superintendents has not changed from recent years, staying at 61.3% of the expenses that are incurred. As in the past, municipalities can use the funding to cover the drainage maintenance activities or the cost of employing a drainage superintendent, as they see fit.

Mr Dunlop: I know that many municipalities, including those in my riding, will be happy to hear this news. Can you tell us a little bit more about the drainage review that you have completed, what people were consulted, what is the goal of the review and what we can expect as some of the news in the final report of the review?

Hon Mr Hardeman: Again, I want to thank the member for Simcoe North for the question. In the normal course of business it becomes necessary to review

existing programs to ensure that they are being delivered in as efficient and effective a manner as possible. Participation in the consultation process was excellent. We met with farmers, landowners, municipalities and their employees and many others. More than 600 people attended 14 public meetings across the province and we received some excellent feedback. I want to let the member know that municipal drainage programs were not the only ones we were discussing out on the road. We were also consulting on the effectiveness of the tile drainage loan program and the tile licensing and installation program and we received a lot of good advice on these programs as well.

We are carefully reviewing the information we received and hope to release the results of this important consultation as soon as possible. We all know that municipalities need information on drainage grants to move forward with their budgeting process, and that is why we are going ahead and letting them know what their allocations will be this year.

DRUG TREATMENT COURTS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a question for the Attorney General. You will be aware of the Toronto drug treatment court pilot project which has been undertaken by the federal government in co-operation with the province of Ontario. I believe it's fair to say that that's been viewed by most observers to be a significant success. Have you and your officials had the opportunity to review this pilot project, and are you of the view that it should be expanded to other communities?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I am familiar with the court's operation. I've met with the presiding justice and with the crown who normally advocates in that court. As you know, it's operated at the old city hall. It's operated through the provincial court system in Ontario. We have supported the project through the provision, of course, of judicial resources, court resources, the federal drug crown who works in that court.

It seems to have some positive results, I can tell you. That was what was conveyed to me when I met with those responsible for the court. Yes, I do think it's certainly worthy of further work, not only in Toronto but perhaps elsewhere in the province.

Mr Duncan: Minister, you're no doubt aware that the drug treatment court's objective is to deal with accused persons charged with drug trafficking offences by addressing addiction at an early stage in the proceedings, with treatment monitored by the court itself.

A group in my community consisting of the federal drug prosecutor for Essex county, a well-respected provincial court judge and representatives of the criminal bar would like to establish just such a court in Essex county. Members of that group tell me that the federal Department of Justice will consider such a court from a jurisdiction outside Toronto if the province of Ontario

agrees to fund treatment and other related expenses associated with that jurisdiction's proposed drug treatment court and also if the province agrees to include some Criminal Code changes from that jurisdiction into the proposed drug treatment court.

This initiative seems to do a lot to help reduce drug-related crime and is an important step forward. Will you commit today to consult with your colleagues the Minister of Health and the Minister of Community and Social Services to ensure that the funds that are needed to make these courts work in other communities, courts which you just acknowledged yourself appear to be successful—will you undertake today to put the same kind of zeal into establishing these drug treatment courts as you've put into mandatory drug testing for welfare recipients?

Hon Mr Flaherty: Certainly, if there's a group in the honourable member's riding who want to work on a similar court project in Windsor, then I welcome them to make arrangements to visit the project in Toronto and meet with the people here and to seek to emulate it in Windsor.

It's a two-way street, of course, with the federal government. If they're asking us to take over treatment responsibilities and so on, then I would ask them to appoint some judges to the Unified Family Court in Toronto, where I've been waiting for a year now—and not only in Toronto but around the province so that we can expand the Family Court around the province. I'd be happy to discuss with the federal Minister of Justice further work together with respect to the drug courts. I need help with respect to the Family Courts, because those are section 96 judges appointed by Ottawa.

1440

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I have a question for the Solicitor General. Minister, as you're quite aware, in my riding of Kitchener Centre I've worked with the police—the chief, Larry Gravill, and many of the officers—and safety has been one of my top priorities, particularly in the area of road safety. They recognize that it is also one of our government's priorities.

Recently it's been noted in my riding that some of the younger members of our society, particularly those who wear the skateboard pants, are jeopardizing road safety by playing chicken in traffic and disregarding the rules about the appropriate way to cross roadways. Quite often they walk across the road, eyeing down the motorists. They walk across with a swagger. They defy the motorists. They view it as a game. What tools do the police have to stop this behaviour?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for his question. As the member has indicated, road safety is a priority for the government.

To address this issue, the police have several statutory tools to help them discourage those who are posing a danger to themselves and also to motorists. Section 144 of the Highway Traffic Act addresses rules of the road, including where and when pedestrians may cross the roadway. Furthermore, section 214 of the Highway Traffic Act states that a violator of part X or its regulations may be fined.

The Criminal Code does not specifically address the rules of pedestrian behaviour; however, section 180 of the Criminal Code, or the common nuisance section, does make it an offence for any person to commit an unlawful act which endangers the lives, safety, health, property or comfort of the public.

The police have other initiatives as well. In the city of Toronto, in fact, the Toronto police service started—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the Solicitor General's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Wettlaufer: My supplementary is also for the Solicitor General. Our government, as you're aware, believes that everyone in Ontario has the right to be safe from crime.

This past Friday, I had members from the Kitchener Downtown Neighbourhood Committee come into my constituency office, and they were pointing out what they had successfully been able to do over the course of the last 12 months in eliminating prostitution from their neighbourhood. They worked with the police, and quite successfully, I would add. They believe, as we do, that we should be able to walk in our neighbourhoods, use public transit, live in our homes and send our children to school free from the fear of all criminals.

Our government has made a commitment to the people of Ontario to improve the safety of our communities, like our Partners Against Crime initiative, which invested \$150 million, putting 1,000 net new front-line police officers on to the streets. More police officers on our streets and providing the police with the tools they need to help make our streets safer is just one of the ways that our government has helped to make our streets safer. We were complimented on that by the Kitchener Downtown Neighbourhood Committee.

Minister, could you tell my constituents about the investments our government is making in my riding of Kitchener Centre—

The Speaker: Order. The member's time is up.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Once again I would like to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for the question.

There are many programs in which we invest in the Waterloo area, but I'd like to speak today about one specifically if I could. For over five years we have been supporting the RIDE program—Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere—in Kitchener. In fact, last May I was happy to have the member from Kitchener Centre with me when we presented a cheque to Larry Gravill, who is the chief of the Waterloo police. That means that since 1995 about \$155,000 has been invested in the RIDE program.

Although many of us will start to think about the RIDE program now as we near the holiday season, unfortunately, people still do persist in drinking and driving. Clearly, this is a problem that we think should be addressed. This is not simply a seasonal problem. This should be addressed—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the Solicitor General's time is up.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health and it concerns Bill 159, your Personal Health Information Privacy Act. Three years ago, a staffer in the Ministry of Health's office offered information about a doctor's records to a reporter for the purpose of smearing the doctor—abuse and a breach of the law. Again three years ago one of your colleagues, the minister of corrections, breached the criminal law of Canada when he rose in the Legislature and shared personal information about a young offender—again the abuse of personal information and a breach of the criminal law. So in view of the propensity of your government to give away and to abuse people's personal information, can you tell me, Minister, why should the people of Ontario trust your government to define who gets access to their personal medical files?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Obviously, the leader of the third party has a short memory. I would again strongly recommend to the leader of the third party that he and his caucus work with all members of this House in a non-partisan way to ensure that whether it's your government or our government or any other government in the future, we totally do everything we can to protect personal health information—the collection, the use and the disclosure.

Mr Hampton: I will try again to get an answer to the question I asked. Two years ago, Minister, your government took the financial information of thousands of Ontario citizens who keep their savings account at the Province of Ontario Savings Office. You took that information and, in breach of the law of Ontario, you gave it to a corporate pollster to forward your agenda. When it comes to forwarding your agenda, breaking the law doesn't matter, and when the privacy officer caught you at that, you tried to cover up the information. Just last week, we now find that the ministry of corrections is once again sharing personal information of young people in this province that is in breach of the criminal law of Canada, and your answer is to appoint somebody to look at it who is already in a conflict of interest. So I ask you again, Minister: in view of the fact that your government routinely breaks the criminal law of Canada, the privacy law and the privacy of medical records, why should the citizens of Ontario trust your government to define who is going to have access to their medical records? Why should they trust you when your record is already so bad?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I know we could all go back in history, but the reality is that it is time to move forward. It is time to move forward because at the present time there is no consistent, comprehensive approach to protect personal health information. It is absolutely essential because we were all advised 20 years ago by the Ontario royal commission that such reforms are necessary. As we move into the information age, we need to move forward. Let me remind you that Frances Lankin herself said January 19, "Many governments had the opportunity to introduce health information privacy legislation." The privacy commissioner has been urging that for a long time. He urged me. He made it under the Liberal government. I would say to the leader of the third party, you have an opportunity to make sure the appropriate protection will be there. Let's work together in a non-partisan way to do—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

1450

NATURAL GAS RATES

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Minister of Finance. It concerns the rapidly and sharply increasing cost of home heating for the winter of 2000-01.

The minister will know that home heating fuel and, more particularly, natural gas prices are going through the roof. An average Ontario residence this winter, we are told, can now expect, if they heat with natural gas, to pay anywhere between \$500 to \$800, perhaps up to \$1,000 more this year than last year.

It's obvious from the weather today that winter is here. My question to you: does your government intend to provide any financial assistance to homeowners in the province of Ontario, particularly those on limited and fixed incomes, to help those individuals of modest means to cope with these sharply increased costs?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): No, not directly in terms of a specific program, if that's what the honourable member is thinking of, directly for this purpose.

Of course we did refund to taxpayers of the province of Ontario \$200 apiece to those who have spent that. Different provinces obviously have different approaches to these problems. The province of Alberta, of course, has one approach; we have another. I'm not aware of any other province that has a direct program.

Mr Conway: That is disappointing, because a senior citizen living in my town of Pembroke, Ontario, on a fixed income is going to find, as I said earlier, that they are going to have—

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Yes, they may have received \$200. Many of these people on fixed and low incomes will not have received all or any of that \$200 rebate. But let's say they did; let's say they got \$200 back from you a couple of weeks ago. We know that if they heat with natural gas

this winter, they're going to be paying probably three or four times that amount just to heat their homes.

The federal government has announced a targeted program to assist these people. The Alberta government has announced a program. The Saskatchewan government, over the weekend, announced a program.

Minister, you yourself tabled documents here last week that indicated that your revenues this year are up almost \$2 billion. Given that fact and given the fact that we're talking about, and my request is only for, those people on fixed or low incomes, surely a prosperous, generous Ontario can afford, with the kind of revenues we've now got, to provide some kind of special assistance program with these heating costs, particularly for people on fixed and low incomes?

Hon Mr Eves: With respect to taxation matters directly, of course we have reduced personal income taxes dramatically. If you are a homeowner there are numerous tax credits, including the Ontario property tax credit. We have certainly reduced the provincial education portion of both residential and commercial property taxes in Ontario. With respect to seniors and individuals of modest means, there is provision, of course, in property tax legislation for municipalities to provide that directly to seniors and those income earners of modest means.

In addition, lately the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat has been meeting and facilitating meetings with seniors' groups and the gas companies to see what can be done about the escalating gas prices, which fluctuate from time to time.

RESEARCH AWARDS

Mr Brian Coburn (Ottawa-Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. The media and others seem to pay a lot of attention to the notion that Ontario and Canada suffer from a brain drain. In fact, we are told that some of the leading young minds in research and development are seeking opportunities outside of Canada. I'm particularly interested in this because of the growth in research and development in Ontario and, in fact, in the Ottawa area. I'd like to know what your ministry is doing to ensure that Ontario can attract and retain promising young researchers.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I want to thank my colleague from Ottawa-Orléans for the question. We recognize the value of research and development in this province, and we've been doing quite a bit to reverse the brain drain—even though, during the first couple of years that I was Minister of Science, the federal government denied there was a brain drain.

We're investing in Ontario's future now, because we think it's the best way to prop up our economy should there be a downturn in the future in the North American or world economy. We're spending over \$30 million to support a new program called the Premier's Research Excellence Awards. The Deputy Premier and I hosted the

annual awards dinner just last week. Some 305 of our best and brightest scientists and talented researchers have been awarded \$100,000 from the province and \$50,000 from their respective universities, who in turn have private sector partnerships—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Answer.

Hon Mr Wilson: —to raise that money. With that money, they're able to attract researchers from the United States and from other countries to come here and work on those world-class research teams.

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Coburn: I'm particularly encouraged that you're actively involved in keeping top talent in Ontario. You mentioned we support and recognize top talent through the Premier's Research Excellence Awards. Dr Steffany Bennett comes to mind when you mentioned that type of excellence and expertise and the story she has told of how she was taken aside many times when she was a young girl and encouraged to pursue her dreams in science and to excel in those areas. She cites this encouragement as the key to allowing her to fulfill her childhood dreams and to do so in Canada. Minister, maybe you want to expand on some of Dr Bennett's work.

Hon Mr Wilson: Dr Bennett is an excellent example. She has completed her PhD at the University of Ottawa, but prior to that she was at Harvard pursuing her post-doctoral fellowship. Subsequently, she returned to Ottawa to initiate her work as an independent researcher. She told us at the awards dinner last week that she had lots of offers to stay in the United States but that the climate is now right to come back to Canada, particularly Ontario.

In particular, she deals with Alzheimer's disease. There's an excellent quote, I think. You certainly could hear a pin drop among the people who were at the awards dinner when she said, "First, my team and I are going to improve the daily lives of Alzheimer's patients; then we're going to cure the disease."

It's people like Dr Steffany Bennett who make us proud to support the Premier's Research Excellence Awards. We hope they will become as prestigious as a Smith award or a Polanyi award. Certainly we refer to those excellent researchers, all 305 to date, as the Nobel prize winners of the future.

I'm happy, as I know the Deputy Premier and the Premier are very happy, to support this awards program and to encourage other researchers to come to Canada, particularly Ontario, to do their work here.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, last week, as you know, the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission board voted to accept the KPMG consultants' report that

recommended the dismantling of the main transportation and telecommunications company of northeastern Ontario. The commission employs close to 1,000 people throughout northern Ontario, while creating thousands more indirect jobs in the region. If you go ahead with these recommendations, you're going to be punching another hole in the economy of northeastern Ontario. Before you make such a momentous decision on the future of the ONTC, will you give our municipal officials, the business community and the general public an opportunity to comment?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I appreciate the question from the member. The ONTC report was tabled just about a week ago, as a matter of fact. I think it's important, and I'm pleased the directors are addressing the issue of trying to improve customer service across the array of services. I have a lot of confidence in the potential of northeastern Ontario. I want to make sure the transportation services there are going to support that potential for economic growth and job creation. The overall strategy is to ensure that services are modernized to the 21st century to help promote job creation in northeastern Ontario. I'm always very pleased to enjoy input from the member or others in the northeast on how to continue to do that.

Mr Ramsay: Minister, your recommendations have nothing to do with improved customer service. It's got everything to do with the elimination of all transportation services in northeastern Ontario. The Northeastern Ontario Mayors Action Group has been asking for a meeting with the commission chair, Royal Poulin, for the last five months to bring forward their ideas for customer service improvement. Now, after the fact, he's decided to meet with them on Friday.

We, the residents of northern Ontario, need to have a say regarding the future of our transportation and telecommunications service. Will you ensure that we get the full report and that you will hold public hearings in all the corridor towns and cities along the track, and before a decision is made, will you promise to meet with the municipal officials of northeastern Ontario?

Hon Mr Hudak: In fact, for the past 18 months as minister I've had the chance to enjoy many meetings with the mayors. I've had the opportunity to talk to the member himself on a couple of occasions about the ONTC. He knows very well this issue has been studied and studied and studied again. It's very important for us to try to move forward and see what kind of recommendations are the right ones to address improving the services in the northeastern corridor, whether it's rail, whether it's bus, whether it's the ferry services, whether it's telecommunications. I think we have to realize that times are changing in northeastern Ontario and ensure that we're going to help promote job creation, like we're doing by doubling the heritage fund, like we're doing by record investments in northern Ontario highways to make sure that our transportation and telecommunications services are going to support that and help create jobs in northeastern Ontario.

1500

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the minister responsible for children. I was very pleased last Wednesday when our government launched the early years challenge fund. I understand that this is the latest step in our early years action plan, which of course is based on the Early Years Study, our government's report on early childhood development. Minister, I would like to know today, what is the new fund going to mean to the constituents in Durham, but most importantly, what is it going to mean to the children of Ontario?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I'm very pleased to have this question from the member for Durham. The early years challenge fund is another process we are making in terms of confirming the priority for this government of children and youth in this province. The challenge fund itself is indeed, I say to the member asking the question, going to make a great deal of difference to the children in his riding, in the whole of Durham, and in fact to children across the entire province.

The wonderful thing about the early years challenge fund is that it is a \$30-million commitment by this government, which ends up resulting in \$60 million worth of programming for young children.

Mr O'Toole: Minister, I can see you're just as excited as I am. It's an excellent opportunity for communities to get involved. I know there will be great interest in this fund in Durham and I'm pleased to be able to inform my constituents of this new initiative. With the creation of the province-wide network of programs and services, some of which you've touched on here, it's obvious that our government is playing a critical role in getting this new venture off the ground by providing the seed funding of \$30 million.

But there's an important role for the community here too. I believe the community must rally behind this project to help our children in Ontario. Minister, if I might compliment, you're just the minister to lead this charge. What role is there for my community in this bold new initiative?

Hon Mrs Marland: There is a very important role not only for this member's community but for all the members in this House, for every community across this province. The important role is, first of all, for them to know that this \$30 million will be matched dollar for dollar in value with everything the local community does in developing early child development and parenting programs. Whether it's cash or in-kind donation of services, goods, space, materials, the local community will develop and define the program that meets their local needs, and we are going to be there 100% to fund this excellent program, which for the first time is unique in Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Deputy Premier. The people of Walkerton have been traumatized by the water quality crisis. They've suffered horrible psychological trauma, in addition, as you know, to health and illnesses. It will take people a long time before they can trust the water again. They'll need to see that water quality remains consistently high for many months. They know from experience that their lives could be on the line, and it will take a very long time before they can trust again in your government to protect their water and their health.

On Friday—and I have a copy here—the Concerned Walkerton Citizens sent a formal request to the Premier. This letter asked him to supply bottled water to the community for at least another six months. It would be a small price to pay to ease people's anxiety as they regain their trust in the water. Minister, will you commit to this today for the people of Walkerton?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I think the Minister of the Environment would like to respond to that.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I can tell the member opposite that we've been there for the people of Walkerton from day one. We've been there to assist them with that.

I can tell you that last week, on Tuesday, when the water was turned on in Walkerton I was there. I met with the mayor of Walkerton, Mayor Thomson. The issue of the health study was not raised, but I can tell you that if this matter is raised it's something obviously that will be looked at.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to the United States to receive medical attention;

"Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as macular degeneration, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are not covered by OHIP;

"Whereas many residents of St Catharines and other communities in Ontario are unable to find a family doctor as a result of the growing doctor shortage we have experienced during the tenure of the Harris government;

"Whereas many assistive devices that could aid patients in Ontario are not eligible for funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health;

"Whereas community care access centres have inadequate funding to carry out their responsibilities for long-term and home care;

"Whereas the Harris government has now spent over \$185 million on blatantly partisan government advertising in the form of glossy brochures and television and radio ads;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government of Mike Harris to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising and to invest this money in health care in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature. I am in full agreement. I hand it to Andrew, our page.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition signed by over 700 people, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the strike at Falconbridge-Noranda has now gone on for five months and long strikes hurt not only the striking workers but also the community in which they live; and

"Whereas Falconbridge-Noranda demands that its unionized workers accept a contract written solely by the company which removes long-standing health and safety protections, lowers wage scales and otherwise undermines the human dignity of union members; and

"Whereas the company refuses to negotiate with CAW Mine Mill local 598 workers; and

"Whereas in order to enforce its demands, Falconbridge-Noranda has hired scab labour to replace long-time workers, thereby continuing production; and

"Whereas labour legislation enacted in 1995 by the government of Ontario makes it possible for the company to do this;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to intervene in the dispute and use its offices to influence Falconbridge-Noranda to return to the bargaining table and work out a new and fair contract with local 598."

I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to this.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Pat (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it has been determined that recent funding allocations to the developmental services sector in the communities of Sarnia-Lambton, Chatham-Kent, and Windsor-Essex have been determined to be grossly inadequate to meet critical and urgent needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Community and Social Services immediately review the funding allocations to the communities of Sarnia-Lambton, Chatham-Kent, and

Windsor-Essex, and provide funding in keeping with the requests made by families or their agents."

I affix my signature to this petition.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got many petitions from many concerned citizens.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the annual rent increase guideline for multi-unit residential dwellings in Ontario increases every year more than the rate of inflation and more than the cost-of-living increase for most tenants;

"Whereas no new affordable rental housing is being built by the private sector, despite the promise that the implementation of vacancy decontrol in June 1998 would encourage new construction;

"Whereas one in four tenants pays over 50% of their income on rent, over 100,000 people on the waiting list for social housing, and homelessness has increased as a result of unaffordable rents;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement an immediate province-wide freeze on rents which will stop all guideline increases, above-guideline increases and increases to maximum rent for all sitting tenants in Ontario for a period of at least two years."

I support this fully, and I affix my signature to it.

1510

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): This is again a unique petition, sort of handed out in a newspaper, but it's very important.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to be used on vintage automobiles."

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas charities such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraisers on streets, sidewalks and parking lots;

"Whereas the Safe Streets Act, 1999 effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities; and

"Whereas charitable organizations are dependent on these fundraisers to raise much-needed money and awareness;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the government of Ontario amend provincial legislation by passing Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act, 2000," standing in the name of Mr Crozier, "to allow charitable organizations to conduct fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots."

In support, I affix my signature and give the petition to Tim to take to the table.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got more petitions on the province-wide freeze on rents.

"Whereas the annual rent increase guideline for multi-unit residential dwellings in Ontario increases every year more than the rate of inflation and more than the cost of living increase for most tenants;

"Whereas no new affordable rental housing is being built by the private sector, despite the promise that the implementation of vacancy decontrol in June 1998 would encourage new construction;

"Whereas one in four tenants pays over 50% of their income on rent, over 100,000 people on the waiting list for social housing, and homelessness has increased as a result of unaffordable rents;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement an immediate province-wide freeze on rents which will stop all guideline increases, above-guideline increases and increases to maximum rent for all sitting tenants in Ontario for a period of at least two years."

I support this fully, and I sign my name to this petition.

OPP DISPATCH CENTRE

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to locate the eastern regional OPP dispatch centre in the vacant and relatively new OPP building on Wallbridge-Loyalist Road in Quinte West."

I am pleased to add my signature to this petition.

PHOTO RADAR

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Mike Harris made the decision in 1995 to cancel the Ontario government's photo radar pilot project before it could properly be completed;

"Whereas two Ontario coroners' juries in the last year, including the jury investigating traffic fatalities on Highway 401 between Windsor and London in September 1999, have called for the reintroduction of photo radar on that stretch of 'Carnage Alley';

"Whereas studies show that the use of photo radar in many jurisdictions, including British Columbia, Alberta, Australia, many European countries and several American states, does have a marked impact in preventing speeding and improving road and highway safety, from a 16% decrease in fatalities in BC, to a 49% decrease in fatalities in Victoria, Australia;

"Whereas photo radar is supported by the RCMP, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, several police departments, including many local Ontario Provincial Police constables and many road safety groups;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Ministry of Transportation reinstate photo radar on dangerous stretches of provincial and municipal highways and streets as identified by police. The top priority should be 'Carnage Alley,' the section of the 401 between Windsor and London, and all revenues from photo radar should be directed to putting more police on our roads and highways to combat aggressive driving."

I affix my name to this very useful petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 147, An Act to revise the law related to employment standards, when Bill 147 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered to the standing committee on general government; and

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That the standing committee on general government shall be authorized to meet on Wednesday, December 13, 2000, during its regularly scheduled meeting time for one day of clause-by-clause consideration; and

That the deadline for filing amendments with the clerk of the committee shall be 9:00 am on Wednesday, December 13, 2000; and

That the committee be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour of adjournment on that day until the completion of clause-by-clause consideration; and

That, at 4:30 pm on the day designated for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration and not later than December 14, 2000. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to have been passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on general government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That, when the order for third reading is called, two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, the debate time being divided equally among the three caucuses, after which the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

1520

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Stockwell moves government notice of motion number 84.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Speaker: Would you confirm for me that this is the 15th time that the government has moved closure on the last 18 bills that it has introduced in this House, thereby cutting off democratic debate? Would you confirm that for me, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Labour, from Etobicoke.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'll help you, though: that's not right. So there you are. You're so wrong, it's incredible. I think I would be safe to say that I don't think we've moved closure more than one or two times, in fact, during this sitting.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Time allocation; he's playing a word game.

Mr Gerretsen: Time allocation is closure.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Thank you so much. The sky is green, the grass is blue, then.

Mr Speaker, I'd like to just have a brief overview on this whole modernization of the workplace Employment Standards Act, but I will be sharing my time. If you could just give me a second here in my notes, I'll tell you who I'm sharing it with. Here we are. I'm sharing my time with the member for Kitchener Centre, Mr Wayne Wettlaufer. I'm also doing it with the member for Peterborough, Gary Stewart; also the member for London-Fanshawe, Mr Frank Mazzilli; and where would we be if we didn't share it with the member for Durham, John O'Toole?

I don't want to get too involved. We had a lot of debate on this at second reading. We've had a lot of public hearings on this. I spent a lot of time on public hearings on this bill. I spent time in Thunder Bay, in Sudbury, in Windsor, in London, in Ottawa, in Toronto. I went out to Sarnia and Oshawa. We had a white paper that was issued in the ministry. Two years ago, we actually did another white paper and sent all this stuff out as well.

You know, we've had a lot of public input into this piece of legislation. We've had a lot of discussion about this bill. From stem to stern, there has been discussion. Now, I can't tell you that it's accepted by all sectors within the provincial government or the province of Ontario, but I can tell you those people who actually take the time to read the bill, phone my office, or the people who I speak to in public hearings about this bill—I've got to tell you, once I've had the opportunity to explain the government's rationale, to explain the government's position on this bill, a lot of the fearmongering and scare tactics that have been used by the ne'er-do-wells have usually been allayed, and those problems don't seem as horrendous or as difficult for the communities out there to accept.

That's what I find most heartening about the bill, because when you get the chance and you get to take the time and explain to the individuals what exactly the bill does, they're not nearly as vociferous or as heated in their comments and their exchanges. They say things like, "I didn't understand it to be that way. Somebody told me that you're forced to work 60 hours a week," and son of a gun, if I explain to them how the process works and how the old process worked, they say, "Well, that's better. This new process is better than the old process."

I don't know why the opposition would be so upset about that. I say, look, opposition parties are there as Her Majesty's loyal opposition and they're there to oppose. I understand that. I appreciate the fact that you have a role to fill, and it's an important role: to oppose government initiatives and offer up alternative points of view. I don't suggest for a minute they shouldn't be doing that.

But after you get down to the nuts and bolts on the bill itself, when you talk to people at public meetings—and this one in Oshawa is a perfect example. Once you get down to explaining what the bill is going to do, and the kinds of checks and balances that I see in the bill, and

then explain them in the bill, they're not nearly as cantankerous as they were on their way in, when they got a few half-truths from some people who are involved in certain sectors out there.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I hear the member for—is it Don Mills?

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Close.

Hon Mr Stockwell: He's cackling away over there. I don't know what he said, but I don't feel any the less for it.

The point I'm trying to make to you is this: we as members of the government have an important role to fill, and that is drafting legislation and ensuring there's a good public debate. When we put this white paper out, and this piece of legislation, we sent this broadly across the province. Their arguments over there are saying, "No, you tried to do this under the cover of darkness." That's not right. We drafted up a white paper and basically outlined what we were going to do. We shipped it out to everybody, including the members of this House.

Then, after we shipped it out, we said to the people of the province, "If you want to make written submissions, please make written submissions. We're open. We want to hear what your thoughts are." But that wasn't it. Then we went out to seven cities and had public hearings in all seven of those cities. I have to tell you, most of those places were dominated by union people, the union executives and, to some lesser degree, by legal clinics that represented certain affected groups. They dominated the public hearing process. They made a lot of suggestions.

For the members opposite, I just want to tick off a few of the suggestions they made that we incorporated. I want to just tell you what some of the union reps who came to the public meetings said that we incorporated into the bill. First of all, they said that the inspectors need the power to subpoena records. Right now they don't have that. One of the legal clinic workers from Gravenhurst, I think it was—I'm not sure; I think it was Gravenhurst—said, "We need to have that inspector have the power to subpoena records from the employer so they can get a full flavour of what the arguments are." You know what? We put that in the bill. We said, "You're right; they should have that power." We put it in the bill.

They also told us that the inspectors should be able to spot audit. Just because you are an employer shouldn't leave you off the hook from a spot audit, like your taxes can be spot audited. Any inspector on any day can show up at that place, demand the records and say, "OK, are you meeting the guidelines of the Employment Standards Act?" That's what the unions were asking for and we put that in the bill. We said, "You're right. That's a good point." We put that in the bill.

One of the very important parts of this bill with the inspectors, and my friend from Hamilton West often commented about this in previous incarnations—I think I'm being heckled from the gallery, Mr Speaker.

The other problem is that the member for Hamilton West said to me, in other incarnations when he was in opposition or when he was in government—I shouldn't say that. I'm not certain that's true, in government, but definitely when he was in opposition he did say, "What we need for the inspector is also any reprisal powers." I don't think he'd debate this with me; I think he agree that the inspectors needed the power to reinstate employees who had been improperly released or let go or fired, the argument being—as we heard at the public hearings—that the employer has more power than the employee and they can simply dismiss them if they don't agree to work overtime, and base it on some fruitless or made-up argument about them not doing a good job.

The member for Hamilton West mentioned that. We heard that at the public hearings. We said, "You know what? You're absolutely right. If an inspector goes in and makes a finding that 'This is an improper firing and you're really firing for other reasons and not for the reasons you're trying to lay out, and you're firing because they didn't want to work overtime or they wouldn't take their holidays one day at a time or something,' the inspector now has the power to reinstate that individual."

Another thing that we said in our white paper that we shipped out across this province, that we found agreement on with the union activists and the legal aid clinics who came in and said, "You should be putting that in the legislation"—and we did put it in the legislation. Do you know what else they said during the public hearings? They said, "Do you know what other power the public inspectors need? Do you know what else they need? They need not just the power to reinstate, not just the power to anonymously inspect and not just the power to enforce these legislative initiatives. They also need the power to anonymously accept a tip from a worker to go in and inspect without telling the employer who was complaining."

1530

A lot of the deputants from the union movement asked for that, and you know what? We agreed. We said, "Yes, you're right, they should have that power." This argument that somehow we didn't listen, that somehow we weren't hearing what the concerns were, is not right. We did hear them. They brought these deputations before us. They made salient, cogent arguments, and you find those arguments in the legislation before this House today.

We also adopted the 10-day crisis leave. I've heard that being berated across the floor. I heard the member for Hamilton East the other day berating the 10-day crisis leave.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): It's not long enough.

Hon Mr Stockwell: He says it's not long enough. That's the point. I've got to tell you, never in the history of this country has any government introduced any crisis leave in any legislation before any Legislature or House of Commons, including when they were in office. This is the first of its kind. Rather than saying, "Oh, good for you. You've taken an initiative that protects employees

that we didn't take," their argument is that it's not long enough.

Mr Agostino: It's a good start. It's not long enough.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It's infinitely longer than you had in legislation and infinitely longer than anyone has in legislation in this country. That was another provision we implemented that was asked for by employers and unions and people out there. This is a bit of a misnomer. This is a misnomer to suggest that all this legislation is employer-driven. It's not. There's a balance, but the problem you have—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I didn't hear that, and I feel just as good for it.

Mr Gerretsen: Selective hearing.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, I heard that.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You see, you weren't listening. You're too busy signing your Christmas cards. I just went through four or five examples from the public hearings where we heard from the unions and heard from the people making deputations who said, "You need to make these changes," and I just told you, they're in the bill. They're in the bill today. I gave five or six examples, and I can go on. That was not it. There are other provisions.

The maternity leave is a good example. We took our time. We consulted with the public, we consulted with employers, and we decided this was a reasonable approach to take. Now, there is concern in the employer community out there. I want to caution the members opposite, I think the concern is broader than you think and I think the sympathies are greater than you imagine. This is not as cut and dried, slam-dunked as you think it is. There's a broad cross-section of the community out there who honestly believe 12 months is too long to ask an employer to hold a job open. But we did consult, we did request, we did ask, and we implemented that.

There's another provision in here that's employee-driven. If you want to talk about this idea that there's a 48-hour maximum workweek and then beyond that, you have to get written agreement between the two, that's a reasonable response, I think. You don't think it is. But to make the argument that there's nothing in this legislation at all for the employees in Ontario is absolute balderdash. It's gobbledegook. It's simply not reading the legislation, not reading the deputations that were made to me when we travelled this province, and not hearing the concerns in the past. Quite honestly, many people, particularly with the provision of reinstatement, anti-reprisal—let me tell you what the old legislation talked about.

If an employee felt they were being unduly dismissed by an employer who was dismissing them because they weren't agreeing to terms and conditions beyond the Employment Standards Act, they could file a complaint with the Ministry of Labour. This is under the old legislation. The inspector could go out there and make a finding that you should rehire this person. All the employer had to do was submit a request to the Ontario

Labour Relations Board and then they'd have a hearing, and the hearing would take up to six months to be heard. Under the old legislation, that employee would be out of work, without pay, without any form of support, unable to buy their groceries, unable to pay their rent for six months, even though they're right as rain: out of work, out of pay, nothing for six months and they're right as rain. Under the new provision, an employer may still appeal the decision of the inspector to the Ontario Labour Relations Board, but that employee, after the inspector makes that decision, goes back to work the next day. They get paid, they go to work, they pay their rent, they put food on their table and they feed their families, based on this legislation, and they're right as rain.

This thought emanating from the opposite benches that there's nothing in this for the employees is absolute balderdash. It just means they haven't taken the time to fully understand and read the legislation and comprehend the decisions and the changes we've made to benefit the employee and benefit the employer in the hopes this brings together parties to create a better working environment for all those people involved.

Mr Caplan: Just like in the schools.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I often discover, especially with the member for Don Mills, that there's no point in arguing the bill at hand. He tries to argue something else because he knows nothing about the bill at hand. I want the member to stand in his place and make the argument that doing it any other way or under the previous method was better. It wasn't better. Deputation after deputation came before me and said, "You can't do this. People are frightened to complain, and if they do complain they only complain after they're fired. They don't get reinstated and it takes six months. They're terrified." We removed the barrier of fear, we removed the barrier of reinstatement and we removed this clout the employer has—the bad employer, I might add—over the vulnerable worker.

That's a protection, a protection the people of this province need, that was introduced and will be adopted by a Conservative government. They're not interested in rhetoric, not interested in talking about half the truth. They're interested in talking about the bill and how the bill protects the people of this province who go to work every day. These are the kinds of things the bill does, and these are the things that the people in this province can look forward to.

I'm running down to a minute or so left in my discussion. I look forward to the discussion. I look forward to clause-by-clause.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I do. I look forward to the amendments offered by the other side. I want to see what it is that you think is wrong with this bill so corrective action, in your opinion, can be taken. It's very interesting. I've not seen any legitimate argument made that says the present situation is good.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm listening. You're not saying anything. That's the difficulty. I want to hear what your concerns are. If you're arguing with me that the present legislation is good, you're the only person making that argument, because nobody out there in the public world is saying that. You're the only one who's telling me the present legislation is worthy. So if the present legislation is no good and apparently our legislation is no good, then let's see the amendments that are going to make your legislation work better. I'm really, really interested in seeing those.

Mr Gerretsen: Don't ask us. It's your legislation.

Hon Mr Stockwell: There you go. You see, the member for Kingston and the Islands falls back into the old opposition refrain, "Don't ask me for answers. I'm just in the opposition. I'm not paid to think. I can only move amendments that can change bills. I'm not paid to think of the solutions. All I can tell you is, the old bill stinks and the new bill stinks." Well, what's your solution? I ask the members opposite, what is your solution? Move the amendments at committee. Tell me what you can do to make this bill better. We're always open for discussion. Let's hear it.

But it's the same thing every time: "We're not in government so I'm not paid to think." That's a sorry, sorry state of affairs. Yes, you're the opposition, but that doesn't preclude you from offering legitimate amendments. In the past, I have had legitimate amendments from the opposition which I've accepted and we've adopted because it was a legitimate amendment. I'm looking forward to seeing those legitimate amendments that you've spent more than five seconds thinking about and have also obviously consulted about with communities out there that would find them acceptable.

1540

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Agostino: I'm certainly pleased to spend a few minutes speaking to the bill. A number of my colleagues want to speak to this important piece of legislation.

When you listen to the minister, you get the sense that this thing is totally employee-driven. You get the sense that workers were lined up at the minister's door saying, "Please make these changes. Please increase the workweek to 60 hours. Please change the overtime provision in the legislation. Please change the vacation period and the fact you can be dictated to as to how you are going to take your vacations, whether it's one day a month, in blocks or whatever the employer feels is appropriate."

When you look at this, it is a very significant piece of legislation. It impacts about five million workers who are non-unionized, generally work in lower-paying jobs and generally don't have the protection a union shop would provide. These are some of those vulnerable workers. They're often new immigrants, younger people or people who have a difficult time accessing our bureaucracy—government—to complain if there's a problem. That's who this bill impacts, and I find it significant.

The minister talks about the fact that there has been lots of consultation, that we had a white paper over the

summer. There hasn't been one minute of public hearings on the specifics of this bill that has been introduced by this government.

This government found it appropriate last year to have public hearings on snowmobile trails. As important as that may be to some people in this province, I suggest that the impact of this piece of legislation on five million Ontarians is going to be much more significant than snowmobile trails. But we had public hearings to talk about snowmobile trails; we took this on the road. As important as that is to some people, we don't think this piece of legislation is important enough to take out to public hearings. We don't think about those vulnerable workers who, I'm sure, were not consulted over the summer and through the white paper the minister released. This government doesn't think those people should have an opportunity to come to the table and tell us what they think of this legislation, because it impacts them. It doesn't impact any of us in this Legislature. It doesn't impact anyone in this building, but it does impact some very vulnerable workers across Ontario.

If you look at the workweek, everything is voluntary, right? The government says, "They don't have to if they don't want to. They can refuse." The reality is that the balance between the employer and the employee is not there. Anybody who suggests otherwise is dreaming if they believe it's an even, balanced situation and that you can negotiate and if you say no, that's the end of it. It's not that simple. There's going to be the fear of reprisals, fear of getting fired, fear of not getting a promotion. There are a lot of intimidating factors. Basically when you have a 60-hour workweek, the reality is you're going to be asked to do it and most of these workers are going to do it.

What makes it even sadder is that not only have they gone to 60 hours, they have also changed overtime provisions to average out over four weeks. Under current legislation you get paid overtime beyond 44 hours per week. Now the government says it is over a four-week period. Can someone from the other side of the House explain to me how someone who works 52 hours the first week and then 40 hours the other three weeks and averages 43 hours over this four-week period does not get one cent of overtime pay? Under the old legislation you basically had eight hours of overtime pay. The old legislation basically said that overtime kicks in after 44 hours. So someone explain to me how that is an advantage to an employee. Can someone tell me how you're helping this employee by ripping him off for eight hours of overtime over that four-week period? I'd be curious to know that. I'd also be curious to know how many workers have come forward and said, "Please do this. Please take away some portion of my overtime. I'm asking the government of Ontario to take away overtime." Maybe you can tell me which employees have come forward and made that request? I'm certain the employers are happy about this.

The minister spoke about emergency crisis leave. And yes, I was critical, because it doesn't go far enough. It is

a start, but I think 10 days to take care of or look after or be with a member of your family, often someone who may be dying, a relative or a parent, a child, is nowhere near enough. If you're going to take that step, then let's do it.

We have pressed for and we have talked about 12 weeks. The Liberal caucus and Dalton McGuinty's platform in the last election was a 12-week leave. We believe that makes it more reasonable, that makes it fair for people. It's an unpaid leave, we understand that, but someone shouldn't have to choose between a job and caring for or looking after a dying relative or a dying partner or child. People in Ontario should not be forced to make that choice. With this legislation you're forced to do that after 10 days.

When you look at the provisions as they deal with vacations and hours of work, again as I said, this legislation basically allows the employer to dictate when you're going to take these, whether it's in daily increments—and the 24 hours off in seven days now is averaged out over 48 hours or two weeks so that means you can be forced to work 12 consecutive days without a day off. That protection has been taken away.

I only have a few minutes left of the time I have to speak on this. It's unfortunate this government is moving closure again on another debate, another significant piece of legislation. They keep talking about democracy all the time. When you look at their labour bill, they keep talking about workplace democracy. It's the height of undemocratic practices by this government to continue to ram bills through the House without any public hearings, without any consultation.

The sad part of this is that it has been a pattern right from day one. This government came in with an anti-worker agenda. It came in with a pro-business agenda. It has basically catered to big business. They call the shots. They have called the shots with this bill, as they have with every other piece of labour legislation you have brought in. If you can point out one piece of legislation in labour that you have brought in that workers have been asking for—when these announcements were made it was widely acknowledged by the government, not only with this bill but with the previous couple of bills that we just passed in the House with regard to labour legislation, that these were business requests. We know that. That's what drives this agenda here. That's what drives this piece of legislation.

It is unfortunate that we have to cater to the few wealthy friends of this government. You're hanging out to dry and exposing five million Ontarians to an unfair workplace. You're exposing five million Ontarians to practices in the workplace that are going to be discriminatory against them. You're exposing five million Ontarians to lower wages, fewer benefits and less control of their workweek, and all of this is wrapped around flexibility. What it does is take people away from their families, it takes people away from their kids. You talk about flexibility in the hours that you work. I'm just not sure how many daycares are open at night, if you want to

talk about flexibility so they can pick and choose when they can work, as you put in this legislation. There is nothing in this legislation that is fair and balanced on the whole. The power is clearly with the employer against the employee, and as much as you can couch it in any way you want, the reality is that this is another bill that's been driven by big business.

This government should listen to all sides, but what I don't agree with is the provision that this government decides to cater to their wealthy friends, and this bill is another example. You decided to cater to the folks who pay \$25,000 a table to sit in that first little circle at the Premier's dinner every year, and those folks will benefit from this bill. The average working person who could nowhere near ever afford to get near the Premier's dinner in this province or afford access to dinners hosted by cabinet ministers or MPPs on the government side of the House, those folks have been shut out again. They're shut out of this agenda; they've been shut out of public hearings, and this, then, is another bill that they're moving closure on today. This is supposed to be another part of workplace democracy. This is supposed to be democracy at work in this Legislature. What is this? Another attempt by this government to ram through very quickly another piece of anti-labour, anti-worker, pro-business legislation that we've been getting sick and tired of and that Ontarians, frankly, are getting sick and tired of.

1550

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): It's really interesting when I hear the rhetoric from the other side. I'd just like to address a couple of the comments made by the member for Hamilton East. He said that the employer is allowed to schedule vacation in blocks that the employer feels is appropriate. That's not quite factual. The status is that the employees can agree to take time off. The employer, granted, is allowed certain flexibility. The employer, for instance, can schedule vacations in a minimum of one-week blocks unless the employer—and I want to emphasize this—and employee agree to schedule vacation in shorter periods, ie, one day at a time or two days at a time. The alternate scheduling—and this is the key here—can be initiated not by the employer but only by the employee. That is hardly at the discretion of the employer.

He also talked about the fear of reprisals under the proposed legislation, that the employee is going to feel so intimidated by the employer. Pardon me, but the fear of reprisals exists today under the existing legislation, not under the proposed legislation. The proposed legislation is designed to take away this fear of reprisal. It is designed with penalties for the employer who tries to intimidate the employee, for the employer who tries to take action against the employee—

Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Speaker: Would you please check if there's a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Would you check and see if a quorum is present, please.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr Wettlaufer: Thank you, Speaker. It's very noteworthy that when that quorum call was made there were only two Liberals in the House and only one NDP, and presently there's only one Liberal in the House and no NDP. It's very noteworthy.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Speaker: If I'm not mistaken, it is not correct and parliamentary to mention who is here and who is not here.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order.

The Chair recognizes the member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr Wettlaufer: It's noteworthy that it was the only Liberal who is in the House who made that statement.

I would like to point out that the comments from the member for Hamilton East were not entirely—I'm not going to say they weren't entirely factual. They were confused. I think that's about the only way I can put it. He described this proposed legislation as anti-labour, anti-worker, pro-business. It's really interesting. Over the course of the last week and a half I've had a number of discussions in my constituency office with some of my business constituents, and do you know what? They've described this legislation as pro-labour. Now, you can't have it both ways. I know the Liberals like to think they can suck and blow at the same time, but that's just not possible.

What I would like to explain here is that this proposed legislation has been described by the Liberals, has been described by the NDP and has been described by the OFL—on the weekend, I saw the protest that they had that was on television. Wayne Samuelson was up there talking about how we were going to force workers to work 60 hours a week. No. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is not an introduction of a mandatory 60-hour workweek. There is no possibility that the workers can be forced to work 60 hours a week.

Four-week overtime averaging? Yes, that's permitted. Does that mean that a worker might work 60 hours in one particular week? Well, it might be possible, if—and I say if—the employer and the employee agree in writing. But it must be in writing. If the employer threatens to fire the employee, or he intimidates the employee into working those 60 hours, what happens? He can be fined, and he can be fined heavily. We're not talking \$50,000; we're talking \$100,000. That's pretty substantial. I would say that's a deterrent in any employer's mind.

I would also like to say that this legislation does something else, and it's not exactly pro-business. When the federal government decided to increase the combination of parental and maternity leave to a parent to 50 weeks a few weeks back, it was necessary for the provinces to

take a look at their legislation and either go along with it or not go along with it. In the province of Ontario, it was felt by the Ministry of Labour that it was very necessary that we go along with this, that we agree, that we coincide our views, our laws, with those of the federal government. That is what we have done. Is this pro-business? I submit to you that it is going to be very hard on some businesses, particularly small businesses, to keep a job open for an individual for nearly a year—oh sure, that business can hire a temporary employee—and it's going to cause problems for that business. I remember when the extension was made to 35 weeks and how difficult it was for me, as an employer, in my small business to keep that job open for 35 weeks. To keep that job open for 50 weeks is going to be very tough on that small business. Is that pro-business? Hardly. What we have done here is taken into account the needs of children, of families, at the expense of business. That's hardly pro-business.

I know the member from Hamilton West is going to get up and he's going to criticize this legislation as being anti-labour legislation that wasn't necessary. I know. When he was the labour minister for the NDP government, I know they never gave consideration to revamping labour legislation. There was a very good reason for that: nobody was working. As far as the Liberals were concerned, they didn't care about revamping labour legislation to ensure that workers had some rights, that there were jobs. They didn't care about that. They cared about increasing spending, and it wasn't all in the right places. I know the people in my riding, for instance, were wondering where all the spending was being funnelled because it sure wasn't into the health care area in my riding.

The members opposite talk about health care spending all the time. Let me tell you, the people in Kitchener sure didn't see any of this largesse on the part of the Liberal government when they were doling out funding, not in the area of health care anyway. It has only been in the last five years that we've noticed in my riding any improvement in health services as a result of funding that our government has made. It's wonderful to be in opposition. I can just see it.

1600

Interjections.

Mr Wettlaufer: There they are. They're laughing over there, or signing Christmas cards.

Do you know the advantage they have? I know they love being in opposition, because they don't have to formulate any policies. All they have to do is ridicule ours. They don't have to worry about coming up with—

Interjections.

Mr Wettlaufer: Listen to the cackling and the heckling. Isn't it wonderful? You fellows over there are just wonderful. You guys are great. You haven't come up with an original idea of your own in the last 25 years, but you like to criticize what we have. The member from Hamilton West hasn't come up with an original idea of his own, either.

Anyway, my time is running out and I know that some of the other members would like to speak, so I will sit down right now.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I just wanted to remind the member from Kitchener Centre that being in the opposition isn't all that wonderful, but it does have its advantages. You suggest that we haven't had an original idea in 25 years. I haven't been around that long, but in the seven years that I've been here, I've been in committee where some reasonable, good suggestions have been made through amendments to legislation and, frankly, this government holds the record above all for just simply disregarding any clauses that would amend legislation. So if you suggest we haven't had an original idea, the very least you could do is say, "Out of all those suggestions, there must be one or two good ones."

As a matter of fact, I think you've taken it here, because there are two clauses I want to speak to in the time I have: the one for maternity leave and the clause around emergency leave. Yes, the federal government, in its wisdom and in its concern for families in this country, increased parental or maternity leave to 50 weeks. Yes, it was the choice of this government to follow that lead. When it was first suggested by us that you do that, you turned it down flat. You said, "It's impossible. It just won't work." Small business, I think, is typically what you said would be harmed—

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: Now there's heckling and cackling coming from over there. So the government members are really no different from the opposition members when it comes to that.

Anyway, you took that suggestion, and I think that's good. In my business career, I was involved in what I suppose might be considered a small- to medium-sized business. At one time it averaged around 40 employees. The member from Kitchener Centre said it's going to be extremely difficult to get someone to work for 35 weeks, let alone 50 weeks. I suggest it might be easier. I think it might be easier to get someone to substitute for 50 weeks. It gives them more experience. It gives them another 15 weeks. Apparently they were available when they would come into the job on a short-term basis. That will give them that much more experience, so when that 50 weeks is up, they'll be able to go to another employer and say they have that much more experience. If for no other reason, then, it might give a little opportunity in the job market for someone to avail themselves of that experience.

I can think back to when Joan's and my children were born and in their early years. We were fortunate enough to be able to work out the fact that my wife could end up taking about eight years off until Nancy and David were both in school. There was less daycare in those days, but that was something we had to deal with. Maybe the financial pressures on young couples were not as great in the mid to late 1960s and early 1970s as they are today,

but we were able to work that out without the opportunity to have this maternity leave that we're suggesting today.

I think that's a good thing, and that's part of this bill that I can support, except it's one of those things that are called hostage clauses. When we look to emergency crisis leave, in some cases, quite frankly, 10 days isn't enough. Is this a good compromise? I don't know. Time will tell. But with some serious diseases that families face in crisis today, I know there must be numerous examples across this province where families actually have had to sacrifice at great length in order that they could care for a loved one. That shouldn't be. Maybe after some experience with this 10-day leave, we can look at some alternatives similar to the maternity leave. There are very few crises that families find themselves facing that are more serious than the sickness of a loved one. Yes, most families, without question, would make that sacrifice, so I certainly think this 10 days is a good first step forward.

As far as the rest of the legislation is concerned, the 60-hour workweek, agreement on that; agreement on a vacation being taken in smaller chunks. It's much like in this Legislature. Let me compare perhaps the employer to the government and the employee to the opposition. What gets done in this Legislature with a majority government is what the government wants. I think employees will face a similar situation in the workplace. They say it's optional. In other words, if you don't want to work a 60-hour workweek, the employer can't do anything about it. If you don't agree with them on that, no problem; the employer just says, "Thank you very much. I asked. I understand you don't want to do it and that's OK." Well, I'm not so sure that's the way it's going to work.

I don't know how many employers out there—I have absolutely no idea—will take advantage of something like that. We don't know what's in somebody's head. We can write laws, but we just don't know how they're going to react to that. Will that affect an employee's future with the company when it comes to advancement? I don't know, but it certainly raises that question in my mind.

As far as vacations are concerned, I suppose there are some who will agree that taking a few days off here and a few days off there—we're even told that it may be better in some instances that we get away from the workplace more frequently, although maybe not as long. So that's something else that, over time, we'll determine whether it's a good move. There is part of this legislation that I can certainly support without reservation. There are other parts of the legislation that I have some severe reservations about.

To wrap up in the couple of minutes that I have remaining, I want to speak to the motion that's before us today, that being limiting debate. I've tried this session to get up on every opportunity when a closure motion is brought in to speak of how undemocratic it is. There are 103 of us in this Legislature. We were elected to represent our ridings, and although we may disagree on some philosophies, for the most part we all try to do that. But

you can't do it if a government continually cuts off debate.

I don't know whether the backbenchers on the government side want to speak to issues or not. I suspect they want to take the opportunity to get up and speak. But certainly when you constantly bring in closure motions, it's one of two things: either you're totally undemocratic and you don't want to listen to anybody's debate, your own members' or ours, or you have mismanaged the legislative agenda so badly that you're left with no other option in order to get the legislation passed. So notwithstanding the legislation that's being discussed today, the fact that we have to constantly stand here and speak to closure motions is something that I consider to be very, very undemocratic. It's an option that's being used far too often by this government.

1610

Mr Levac: I rise with some consternation as to whether or not speaking to this bill will have an impact on the government's decision to use time allocation, so what I want to do first is explain very clearly to the people that time allocation is a tactic used by governments that simply want to remove the opportunity for too much debate, for one of two reasons: they're fearful of what might be said, or they need to better manage their time in terms of how the legislative agenda and calendar has come apart. So whether it's the first one or the second one, it's really irrelevant because the fact is the government shows it's doing one of two things. It's either not listening to the people out there, the constituency, as has been pointed out by my colleague from Essex, or this government's agenda is falling apart and they just simply have to get this legislation passed to prove that they've done some work, without any dedication to finding out whether or not the people out there truly want to debate this issue.

I did a little homework and found out that from October 1999 to today there have been 20 time allocation motions. Contrary to the Minister of Labour trying to slough that off and saying, "It's not closure," it's still the same purpose and that is to stop and stifle debate. He tried to say, "It was so few times; I'll be surprised if this was done at all." I have done my homework and, to the Minister of Labour, I'd share this with him in case he hasn't done his: the reality is we've had several very key and important bills that have been passed by this Legislature due to time allocation and, quite frankly, people need to know that a lot of the times it was used, it was for labour issues. So people in our communities across the province of Ontario who are involved in the day-to-day workings of their own labour need to know this very clearly.

The 13th time they used a time allocation motion, for instance, was Bill 119, the Red Tape Reduction Act. The fact is, a tremendous amount of red tape that was declared by this government not to be useful pieces of legislation was wiped out. It affected labour in Ontario.

Bill 132, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Statute Law Amendment Act: again, I want

to make it clear, the trend has been, as the member for Essex pointed out, that we're looking at this kind of captive clause issue. The idea is that one piece of the legislation is very palatable and probably good legislation for all of the people of Ontario, and then they glue it on to another piece of that legislation that is absolutely draconian in nature. They've done that in the colleges and universities bill, Bill 132. They've basically allowed the colleges to grant diplomas and degrees, which this side of the House agreed to in committee. I sat through the entire process and found it to be a very interesting argument in terms of the colleges moving forward with the ability to grant degrees because of the competition across the planet, actually. They're starting to draw some of our college students away from here because we're not degree-granting. The second thing they imposed on that, though, was something diametrically opposite to what that represents in terms of the good of our students in university. They want to privatize universities for profit.

You put these two bills together—they should have been separate—and you say, "We know there's going to be an awful lot of debate out there that basically says, 'No, no, don't do that, but this part of the bill we like.'" So then they go into committee and get all those people lined up who speak on behalf of it and say it's a good piece of legislation, and then in committee when you ask them the question, "What about the other half of the bill; what's your opinion?" in all of the times that I asked that question in committee, only two people cared to respond. The rest of them said, "That doesn't have anything to do with the colleges, so I'm not quite in a position to say anything about it." Then I spoke to them after the committee meeting and said, "Tell me what you think personally." It was, "I think it's a terrible piece of legislation but we've got to accept this one because of this other half." The two people who did speak on behalf of it said that private universities, as long as they're regulated very stringently, could possibly work. So it was a very cold and very mild support.

I want to keep moving here. Bill 69, the Labour Relations Amendment Act, the construction industry: time allocation. "Get out of here; don't talk to us; we're just going to move this bill through because we don't want to talk to you about it."

The Corrections Accountability Act, the one that's near and dear to my heart, Bill 144: time allocation one more time. Well, well, well, when I went back and I did my research, I thought Bill 144 would be the last one we talked about in this House, but unfortunately we're doing it again—20 different times in which we're going to talk about a notice of motion for time allocation.

I want to make sure that people understand. It was read very quickly and somewhat flippantly into the record by the minister, so I want to make sure we explain some of the clauses that were pointed out in this particular motion: "No deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted." In other words, if we want to defer the vote, just to have sober second thought, it can't be done.

"The standing committee on general government shall be authorized to meet on Wednesday, December 13." It's not that far away from today, is it? Today is the 11th, so now we're going to flip this to the standing committee on the 13th, for one day of clause-by-clause consideration. In one day we're going to go through this entire Bill 147, all 88 pages of it. We're going to make sure that we're going to go through it in one day. That also includes amendments.

Here's the next part: "The deadline for filing amendments ... shall be 9:00 am on Wednesday, December 13." That means at 9 o'clock in the morning they'll accept amendments to be read into the record for clause-by-clause at approximately 3:30 in the afternoon. That gives all of us a tremendous amount of time to draft amendments and it gives all of us a tremendous amount of time to be able to digest those amendments, from all sides of the House. So if the government decides to—

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): That's sarcasm, isn't it?

Mr Levac: It is just about. I don't know if that's understood here, because there have been some articles in the newspaper that have talked about some people losing the fine art of sarcasm in this House.

To move to the point, the idea is that if the government decides it may be better to have an amendment for Bill 147, or the NDP decides there should be an amendment to 147, or for that fact the Liberals decide there should be an amendment, we've got from 9 o'clock in the morning until 3:30 in the afternoon to digest all that information, research it and find out whether or not those amendments would be appropriate. That's not the intention. The intention is quite clear: "Put this thing through as fast as possible and then we'll worry about and suffer the consequences after the fact." That's not good management; that's not good government.

"The committee be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour of adjournment on that day until the completion of clause-by-clause consideration," but no other business, and, "At 4:30 pm on the day designated for clause-by-clause"—it doesn't matter how long we meet—"consideration of the bill, those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings," stop things right where they are, and all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments will be heard and voted on. "Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a)." Unbelievable. I want to make sure the people understand what this means to the voting public out there.

When these time allocation motions come forward, particularly in this labour bill, which I want to speak to in just a few minutes, "The committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration, and not

later than"—wait for it—"December 14." We're given one day to complete clause-by-clause of this very important changing bill of the labour movement in Ontario. So we've got three days to decide the fate of all the workers in Ontario. "When the order for third reading is called, two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, the debate time being divided equally among the three caucuses, after which the Speaker shall interrupt"—again—"the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate."

I know I've spent most of my time speaking about this particular time allocation and the fact that this government has used it 20 times. I know, but I have to tell you I needed to do that in order to make sure the people of Ontario understood that every time this particular motion is used, they are being shortchanged an opportunity for the people they've elected to engage in meaningful conversation, and indeed to even go to committee that allows the general public to make presentations in committee hearings. Unfortunately, the heckling on the other side continues to come out when we talk about democracy.

Let's talk about a couple of quick points to this. The couple of quick points are very simple: the bill itself has not been supported as alluded to by the Minister of Labour, has not been receiving wholesale support across the province. The example that happened in the chamber today is going to be duplicated time and time again until this government gets off its high horse and stops beating up the workers of Ontario.

1620

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 147. I'd like to make just one comment about the member from Hamilton East, who a little while ago suggested that every job that wasn't unionized was a low-paying job. I would like to inform him that unless times have changed within the last couple of seconds, that is not factual. To make a comment personally, I have employed a lot of people in 30 or 40 years in this province, many of whom I have the greatest respect for and very major dedication to. Without their expertise, ability and knowledge, any business I had the opportunity of owning and running would never have materialized or become the type and quality of business it was unless I had quality employees. Let me assure the member from Hamilton East that if you don't pay people what they're worth, if you don't pay people for that expertise and that quality, they won't stay with you—a surprise, possibly, for him, but they won't.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Just ask Mike Harris.

Mr Stewart: That's right. I suggest to him that most people who aren't unionized are very dedicated and committed to their jobs and, I can tell you, make excellent wages. Many of them, surprisingly, are on profit-sharing programs or bonus programs that in some cases put them beyond what many union people make.

The reason I want to speak to this bill is that I believe we have to clarify what's in it. The rank-and-file union

person, the floor worker, is only hearing what the union bosses want him to hear. The indication that we are going to force people to work 60 hours is bull feathers. It is absolutely wrong. I believe it's a ploy they're using to try to keep the rank-and-file union people ill informed or uninformed, or they're just plain telling them non-factual information.

If you look at Ontario—indeed, if you look at the world—times are changing. I know it's difficult for the opposition to realize that, but they are changing and we have to be prepared to change with them. If I look at the current ESA, which was enacted in 1968, it has not been significantly updated since the early 1970s. I'd also say to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, if he were here, that the Municipal Act has not been changed—

Interjection.

Mr Stewart: Unfortunately he isn't. I'd like to keep pushing the fact that that act has not been changed for about 125 years, and I suggest it should be. The world is changing, society is changing and indeed the workplace is changing, and I think we have to revisit it. I have a great deal of difficulty when any legislation is enacted, whether it be by our government, the previous government or the one before that, where legislation is supposed to go in and never be looked at again, because the government of the day decides that it is the best it can ever be. That is not what I believe and it's not the way I operate. I hope there would be sunset clauses in all legislation—I mean this most sincerely—and that we look at it, modernize it and clarify it as time goes on. I think that's one of the keys of what this is all about.

The 60 hours we are going to force on people is absolutely not true. The 48-hour maximum is no different in this legislation than it was before this legislation was introduced. The 44-hour maximum for overtime is the same in Bill 147 as it was prior to this legislation being enacted.

It appears the opposition wants to create and retain a bureaucracy that goes on and does little to help in certain areas. I refer to the 18,000 permits to work past 48 hours that were issued by the Ministry of Labour over the last number of months. If that is not a job-creator, I don't know what is.

Why should we have to get a permit if I decide I want to work for my employer an extra couple of hours over the 48 this week and next week? If I have to first of all make an agreement with him, and then he has to go and get a permit—talk about red tape, talk about bureaucracy, talk about cost. The cost of doing business is what I'm talking about, as well as the cost of jobs in doing that, as the member from Durham has said.

I think it is about time the rank-and-file union member had some say in what goes on within the union community. I am certainly in no way suggesting that anybody in the union movement—it's interesting that everybody has harped at me: "Stewart, you're against the unions." I'd like to inform them that my wife was a member of the union. In fact she was secretary to CUPE for a good

number of years. I'm very proud of that for her, and indeed she is very proud of it as well.

But I do believe the rank-and-file union worker has to know what's going on. It is very easy for management or the bosses to keep from their membership or their workers—whatever they might wish to be called—things they need to know. As I said, most floor workers have the intelligence to make their own decisions, and I think they should have that right.

As a result, I want to emphasize again that this myth—I'd like to comment more strongly, but I can't in this chamber—that is being created out there that we are forcing people to work 60 hours is absolutely wrong.

Mr Levac: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if I could have a quorum count, please?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Is there a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Peterborough.

1630

Mr Stewart: Actually, I'm pleased about that call, the fact being that I once again have the opportunity to emphasize the myth that is being presented out there that we are forcing people to work 60 hours. The bottom line, and the only bottom line, of this legislation is that you do not have to apply for a permit up to a maximum of 60 hours; 61 hours, you have to apply for a permit. That is the only basic change in this legislation.

If you look at the act, it's there, and I suggest to the members of the opposition who are suggesting differently that they should read this. "No employer shall require or permit an employee to work more than eight hours in a day or, if the employee has a regular workday and it is more than eight hours, the number of hours in his or her regular workday; or 48 hours in a workweek." That suggests that, "An employer may permit an employee to work up to a specified number of hours in excess of an amount set out in subsection (1) if ... the employee agrees to work those hours."

Sure, there are bad employers out there and there are bad union people out there. But I can tell you this, and I go back to what I said at the start: if you have good employees then I suggest to you that the employer will bend over backward, as will the employee, to make sure that business progresses and thrives and expands, because that's the way we keep this great economy moving. It's certainly been proved in the last six years—850,000-some-odd new jobs.

It was interesting today in the House when the member from Sudbury was suggesting there were fewer strikes back when they were in power. Well, we do know—

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The member for Nickel Belt.

Mr Stewart: Nickel Belt; my apologies.

But it was during that time that there was nobody working, or very few people working, so no wonder she wanted to suggest that. Anyway, it has been my pleasure to speak to this bill. As an employer having many employees over many years, I support working and co-operating with them, and we'll continue to do that as will the greatest portion of employees and employers in this great province.

Mr O'Toole: It's very unique for me to be able to follow the member from Peterborough. It's an honour. He has pretty well said it all, and if I follow him and the viewer at home gets bored, the news will be on soon.

Anyway, Bill 147 has created in the landscape in my riding of Durham a lot of questions. I've tried to respond to those questions. In fact, I want to start by saying that Jerry Ouellette, the member from Oshawa, and I, and Janet Ecker and Jim Flaherty—who represent Durham collectively—listened. We got together and we had the minister down. Minister Stockwell came down and met with, like us, ordinary working people. At least, I consider myself an ordinary working person. We've had negotiations ongoing here too that haven't worked out too well, but that's a debate for another day.

The minister came down and what he did was listen to the people and straightened out some of the myths. For the record, it's important for me to make sure that—it's fine to advertise but the minister set some of these myths and realities straight. I'm going to read the myth. This is the typical way the media have led to this whole way of treating people, the people who consume the 6 o'clock news and read the local newspapers. Mr Speaker, you and I know that they are influenced by these things and it's important for them. I would recommend that you call your neighbours and just say that I'm going to give you the pure facts here now.

This is one of the myths: the government is imposing a standard 60-hour workweek. We're talking about Bill 147, and I think it's section 7 of that bill. That's not in here. I hate to say it: this is misinformation. Is that out of order or anything like that? It's not, so—

Mr Stewart: It sounds OK to me.

Mr O'Toole: It sounds OK to me, too. That's absolutely wrong. Currently, the Employment Standards Act says that employers can schedule up to 48 hours. In places where I've worked, that was generally considered a Saturday, or it could be made up of two hours during the week on various days, but over 48 hours was voluntary. For the record, that's still the case today. The member from Peterborough said it more eloquently than I. He says most things more eloquently than I, especially after 9:30 at night. I know him to be a person that I can listen to for hours, because he does go on a bit.

Nonetheless, what happens today at over 48 hours is they have to get a permit. All Bill 147 is saying is that they have to get a permit after 60 hours. So this whole thing, this program of misinformation that's out there, please, if you have any questions at the end of my limited time, call the office. We'd certainly send you a copy of the pertinent information. As I said, with this bill, per-

haps clarifications may ensue. I don't know the ministry process in this, but it's my understanding they'd like to pass this bill so that we can get on with creating jobs.

Another important thing with that myth is that other provinces have stronger protection on hours of work than Ontario. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, most provinces don't state an upper threshold. They could schedule 60, 70 or 80. But as the member from Peterborough has said—I keep going back; it's a good reference point—it's incumbent upon the employer to be fair with the employees. What this legislation is really doing is allowing real democracy in the workplace where the employer and the employee get together to schedule whether or not they want to work in excess of 48 hours. It must be mutually agreeable. That's clearly specified in this legislation. If I had more time, I'd go through letter and verse here, but unfortunately, the member from Peterborough hasn't left me enough time.

There's another myth here: the government is removing your right to overtime pay. Again, maybe this is becoming rhetorical, but nothing could be further from the truth than that. In fact, we've provided flexibility. For instance, in today's world, perhaps both parents are working and they need more time off. Their solution to their problem is not essentially more pay, but more time off. So they may work complementary shifts; in other words, one partner may, rather than getting paid for working this Saturday, take time and a half off in lieu next week, saving on babysitters and spending more time with their children. That could be either spouse, and I would encourage both parents to be engaged with their children.

The overtime flexibility: I will say for the record that under the Employment Standards Act—Mr Speaker, you would know if you're paying attention—after 44 hours, there is a requirement to pay time and a half. I want to clarify, too, that if you choose to take time off in lieu of pay, that time must be time and a half.

There are so many myths in this whole communication package and I might say I was at Wayne Samuelson's press conference. The Ontario Federation of Labour had a press conference and I went down and listened to it and a lot of it was—we're probably going to hear from the member from Hamilton West. Are we? I hope we are, because I'm sticking around to hear about it. The member from Hamilton West will probably attempt to contribute to this, and I know with the best of interest he will try to do that.

1640

But there's another myth that I've got to get on the record, and there's only a minute left: employees will be forced to take vacations one day at a time. Nothing could be further from the truth than this one-day-at-a-time thing. It allows that to happen. Today, that's not possible; in the future, if the employee and the employer agree, this becomes possible. I think employees are intelligent people.

I think there's another myth here: employees will be forced to sign agreements for excess hours and overtime

and vacation periods or lose their jobs. I want to be on the record—there are only about 30 seconds left.

I think the largest and most important part of this is the anti-reprisal section and the fines. If I hear of any employers in my riding taking advantage of vulnerable employees, I'm on the employees' side. I consider myself one of the working people in this province. I want to be on the record as for the employees.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: I think that we're going to hear from the Liberals, who act like they're the only ones who have heart and compassion. I can tell you that we are in the business of creating opportunities for people and giving them the opportunity to work. That's the key thing.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr O'Toole: Could I have unanimous consent for more time?

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: If the member from the government back benches wants unanimous consent for more time, so do we. We don't want it just for you, but we'll gladly give you some. What we'd like is for the public to get some. So if you want to give us a motion that talks about unanimous consent so the public can have their say in this debate, you've got it. I'll give you that opportunity to place that motion.

Mr O'Toole: I made a mistake.

Mr Christopherson: Now the member says he made a mistake. Obviously, you made a mistake because you have no intention of letting anyone speak except you. We'll get a little bit over here, but by and large, it's about you. You had all the debate you wanted in caucus. You've got your time here, your little bit that you can send off to the labour movement back home in the hopes that some of them will be conned into believing that some of it has real meaning. But in terms of letting the public in, that's not happening, John. I just gave you a chance to move an amendment that would get unanimous consent right now to let the public have a say, and you tell me you've made a mistake by leaving the impression that maybe you were going to let the public in.

Let me pick up on where the minister was earlier today. It was interesting. I listened carefully to what the minister had to say during his remarks, and as always, whenever I follow someone and don't have benefit of the Hansard, if I've misquoted, then I'm prepared to stand corrected and apologize ahead of time, but I do think I have the essence of what the minister said. He was talking in part this afternoon about the fact that he thought it was easy for the opposition because all we have to do is oppose things. I think he was talking about the fact that nobody had to do any thinking. In other words, all the intellectual heavy lifting was being done by him. I suppose by that he means his colleagues, but you guys might want to check that with him yourselves just to be sure that's what he meant.

The fact of the matter is that when you take a look at what the minister said he wants to have happen at committee in terms of people thinking and having input

and making positive suggestions, the first place to start with is exactly what we're debating here today, and this is a time allocation motion. I think the reason most people use the word "closure" is because that's the one that resonates with the public and we want them to understand exactly what's going on. But I might suggest, since Minister Stockwell and others do like to play the little word games, that we talk about the fact that it is a time allocation motion and it goes further than just shutting down debate in this place today. It does that, and there will be a vote in a little better than an hour, and unless lightning strikes, I suspect the government will carry it. They have a majority.

The time allocation motion doesn't just say we stop debating second reading, which is what a closure motion would do—just shut down debate at this stage of the reading. This goes much further. It's much more insidious. A time allocation motion such as the one that we have tabled in front of us dictates—and I use that word knowingly, in all its contexts—that this will go to committee for one afternoon, although the reality is it's only one hour because after 4:30 all debate is over there, too, and the only thing left is voting. We all know that the votes are guaranteed to go in favour of the government because they have majority on the committee. So the time allocation motion, in addition to shutting down debate today on second reading, also leaves one hour for all the members on the committee, from all three parties, to debate a brand new bill. Further to that, the time allocation motion dictates that the third reading debate will be one afternoon; it will be no longer than what we have right here. That's a full stage of law-making in the province of Ontario.

Let's understand the dictatorial power and nature—and look, before anybody jumps and says, "You've used them," I acknowledge that. We have used them. There are times when it makes sense. Our argument is that in this case—and that's what we always do, look at things case by case—it is totally unwarranted, particularly given the fact that nobody's getting a say. Yet, to hear the minister talk today, you'd think we were all going to sit down for a few weeks, take off our jackets, roll up our sleeves and really get to work in looking at this bill and then talking about it, not as partisans but as parliamentarians, to see what we could do to make the bill better. Even for those of us who say up front that we're going to vote against it at the end of the day because the overall direction is not one we philosophically support, that does not automatically guarantee—and every member knows that what I'm saying is true, based on your own personal experience—that opposition members aren't prepared to sit down and work constructively with government members to make a bill better. Even if you're going to vote against the whole thing, you might think there are one or two areas that at least would make the bill better or that there are such blatant concerns that some attempt to mitigate the damage warrants and justifies some effort at the committee level to make that change. It happens. In fact, we just sent off a bill today where, hopefully, that's

exactly what's going to happen. The government says that's what they want. We've indicated that in the past we've done that and we'll do the same thing with that bill.

But today the minister said—I put this in quotations, so I hope I got it accurately—that he “looks forward to the clause-by-clause amendment debate.” Well, the whole point of going into committee is this: we have a bill here that runs 88 pages. Are we dealing with a few amendments that perhaps you could deal with in a few hours—which would still be more than the time that's been allowed here? No. We are talking about a brand new, front to back, in its totality, piece of legislation that eliminates and/or replaces five other laws. You would think that if the minister meant with any sincerity that he was looking forward to clause-by-clause debate, then you would do what clause-by-clause debate or analysis was originally meant to be. That would mean, especially in a case where you've got a totally new law that replaces other laws, that you would sit at the committee table—and anybody who watches it, if we're in the Amethyst Room, or who happens to come to watch the public debate would see that the Chair will call part 1, part 2. The whole idea is to go through things one clause at a time, clause by clause, so you've got as strong a bill as you can have.

Even in the time I've been here, a little over 10 years now, I've seen it happen. So it's not that long ago when the tradition and the philosophy behind committee clause-by-clause work actually took place—not under this government, but it has happened in past. What that should mean is that you go by every page and you look at all these clauses, and then where there are amendments, you let the party that's making the amendment state it and then give a reason for it: why do they want to make that amendment? If it's strictly partisan, clearly partisan, there may not be a great deal of debate. If, however, it is meant to be an improvement, even from someone who's going to vote against the overall bill, then you would engage yourself in that discussion and you wouldn't see the labels “PC,” “Liberal,” “NDP.” You would see “legislation,” “our society,” “what's best.”

1650

Further, the minister said he wants amendments, he wants us to think about amendments, he wants us to take the time to give thoughtful amendments to the bill. He went further, and again I'm paraphrasing, but I don't think I'm in any way not reflecting the essence of what he said. He said he's hoping we can have discussion at committee and that the opposition will have consulted with the public and—I'll just throw this in—he said in part, “Tell me,” meaning what we think. “We're always open to discussion.”

All of what I've just described to you about clause-by-clause, given that this is a new bill, the minister's statements today, the fact that this bill governs millions of people, the time allocation motion, which is what we're debating here today, says that after you've shut down everything else—I'll go to the committee part—

“That, at 4:30”—I want to remind everybody that the earliest time you can start committee is 3:30. Sometimes it's later if the House goes on, but 3:30 is the earliest you can begin the committee. The time allocation motion says, “That, at 4:30”—and for some of the Tory backbenchers that's one hour later at most, at most one hour, “That, at 4:30 pm on the day designated for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved.”

What does that mean? That means that if you've had some of this great discussion the minister wants us all to have, this clause-by-clause analysis of this bill, careful consideration of all the legal implications and nuances as well as all the discussion, intelligent or otherwise, around amendments that would be proposed by the opposition and the government, assuming that miraculously, maybe, all that couldn't be discussed in one hour, then at 4:30, “without further debate or amendment”—debate gone, discussion gone, listening gone—they shut down debate. Then it goes on to say, “put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto.”

In plain language that means, quite frankly, that at 3:30—again, that's the earliest; it's not unusual for committees to start late, depending on when we wrap up question period—the committee is called to order. There is discussion at that point, but I remind you that even if you took the full hour and split it three ways, we get 20 minutes. A committee that's really doing its work can spend 20 minutes talking about a comma, and sometimes it should—20 minutes for each caucus. Obviously no one expects we will have completed clause-by-clause of this bill at 4:30. There will not even be time to debate amendments. There will probably be time to make some opening comments, and possibly if the parties have one or two amendments they want to speak to they can, but that's it.

So all this nonsense that the Minister of Labour is talking about that he looks forward to clause-by-clause—why? Because he likes things that move at lightning speed? He wants amendments? Maybe he wants the paperwork, but he sure doesn't want the discussion and he doesn't want any serious consideration. Then he tells us, “We're always open to discussion”—not that any of us can see. You're sure not going to get discussion in an hour. Then he wants us to report back to him what we've heard in terms of consultation. All this is supposed to happen in one hour, and we're supposed to believe the minister is in any way sincere with the kind of time allocation motion that's in front of us and the dictatorial shutting down of any semblance of democracy in this place. That's what's going on here.

I suspect that if we don't have 30 or 40 amendments—if I read between the lines and knowing him the way I do, I suspect he's hoping there aren't very many amendments from the opposition, so he can say, “See, you guys didn't even care enough to come in and make amendments. You didn't take this seriously. It's all rhetoric,” blah, blah,

blah and the rest of his usual position and spinning. The fact is, it would be insulting if we heard that. We haven't yet, so I'm not accusing him of it. But I expect we will. And if he does, he will be insulting not just the members here but the public, because I can't imagine that anybody on the government benches is prepared to stand in their place today and suggest to me that one hour in committee to accomplish all the things we're supposed to accomplish and all the things the Minister of Labour says he wants to accomplish is a reasonable length of time. I can't imagine. If it happens, let's hear it. But I'd like to know how you can tell this province that one hour is going to achieve all the things I have described earlier and that the Minister of Labour says he wants to happen.

I did give the minister an advance of an amendment, the only amendment I'm going to put in front of him, because frankly we're not about to pretend this government listens. Here's the reality: after one hour, when you only go from 3:30 to 4:30, if you're lucky the majority of government members on the committee won't say no to the idea and at best you can place your amendments as part of your 20 minutes and maybe—maybe—you'll get to say a few words about them. But if you do, keep in mind that doesn't leave the members time to speak about the concerns they have about the rest of the bill. So to do a whole lot of work and tie up legislative counsel for the sake of something that gets read into the record once, with no debate, followed by a vote where the government says no, is not an efficient use of public funds, in my opinion, and I'm prepared to defend that anywhere, any time. If you gave proper time for those committee hearings, then you would have had the proper time and the reflection in the amendments we would make. But when you shut things down like this, you're not looking for amendments. So I say to the Minister of Labour, don't even think of going down that road.

Having said that—there are exceptions to everything—I gave him one amendment. He joked and said, "If I go along with this, does that mean you're going to vote for the bill?" Of course he knows I am not going to vote for this bill, and I told him that. I see the minister is here. That's good. He's back. However, he did say to me that he would take it back to his folks and have a look at it, and that's good to hear.

The amendment says—and I'll read to you just where it fits in. On page 45 of the new bill under Part XVIII, Reprisal, subsection 73(1) says, "No employer or person acting on behalf of an employer shall intimidate, dismiss or otherwise penalize an employee or threaten to do so, (a) because the employee," and then it breaks it down and goes into eight different categories under which an employer is not to intimidate, dismiss or otherwise penalize.

1700

I have, on behalf of the NDP caucus, suggested that we add an eighth that would read as such, "I move that clause 73(1)(a) be amended by adding the following subclause (ix)." I'll read it as the ramp-up and the way people would read it if they looked at the bill. It would

say this: "No employer or person acting on behalf of an employer shall intimidate, dismiss or otherwise penalize an employee or threaten to do so,

"(a) because the employee ...

"(ix) chooses not to agree to an extension of their work beyond 48 hours in any given week, chooses not to agree to average their overtime for a period of more than one week and up to four weeks for the purpose of calculating their entitlement to overtime pay, chooses not to agree that their 30-minute meal break shall be broken into shorter periods, chooses not to agree to accept time off in lieu of overtime pay and/or chooses not to take their annual vacation in staggered allotments."

I figure there's a chance the minister may seriously look at this. If he says no, then it's either because he's going to argue that one of the other clauses already adequately captures this or he'll just state something that really isn't meant to do anything other than deflect the fact that they don't want to be that specific in the bill. But given the arguments we've heard from the minister in particular, and that is why I have given it to him and that's why I've gone this route, it basically very carefully and specifically says that if an employee says no to any of these suggestions, the employer is guilty of intimidating, dismissing or otherwise penalizing an employee or threatening to do so. Is it going to mean the bill is fine? No. Does it mean I'm even going to vote for it? No. Do I believe it's going to stop employers? No. But we've heard this government say often enough that they don't believe this is going to happen, and if it should, they're going to make sure that all the forces of the government swoop in on this particular employer and take care of things, yada, yada.

I guess, more than anything, what I'm saying is, "Put your money where your mouth is." If you're saying it's that clear, then let's put it in legislation. I haven't heard any further discussions from the minister or indication, but I've got to believe at this point, given the politics and dynamic and the fact that all my amendment does is codify in law what the government says they expect to happen, it's got a reasonable chance, other than they don't like to give opposition members credit for anything just as a general rule. I don't think that would stop this minister. I think it has at least a chance.

But I've got to say to you, Speaker, it's not going to change in those places of work where employees feel the threat or the intimidation. There are so many people who are so vulnerable, who can't afford to say no. Why? Because they've seen what this employer is like. We can argue how many there are, but as long as there's one, it ought not to be acceptable in Ontario. I don't care how many there are. Whether it's the 5% I've heard somebody talk about, a handful, or whether it's 80%, the intent and the deliberate focus of government power should be the same.

There are new Canadians who are vulnerable because they don't know society, don't know the rules as well—not all, but some—and many for whom English is their second language and the first isn't French. There are a lot

of employers who take great advantage of that. That's not even speaking to the fact that in this province, to one degree or another—we can debate the degree. I acknowledge we can debate the degree, but there is systemic discrimination in Ontario. Unfortunately, as long as prejudice, bias and hate exist in our society, then there will be discrimination. Whether it's because the system is set up in such a way that it indirectly or inadvertently causes discrimination or whether it's just blatant hate or prejudice on the part of an individual, it's there. For you, as a government, not to put more protection in this bill puts the lie to the argument that you don't see this as a problem. Otherwise, you would have done something about it. You should have.

There are also a lot of young people who are in very vulnerable situations. I say to anyone watching or who happens to be reading this down the road, if you're not directly affected by this, you are indirectly. First of all, anyone who has a young person in their family who works part-time, on weekends, in the summer, or if they're out of school, the odds are, if you look at the statistics, they're going to be in a non-union environment. In fact—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Was that O'Toole saying "lucky"? Yes. Go around GM and say that, John. Let's see you make that little speech down at GM, where you don't have the protection of this place.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Have you seen their last settlement? Pretty lucky to work there, David.

Mr Christopherson: See, now your cabinet minister colleague overrules you, John. She said they're lucky to work there and you say they're not lucky to work there. I think you guys maybe want to caucus and reconsider this. While you're at it, Janet, please take a look at John's idea about unanimous consent to give more time to this bill because we're still eager to do that, you know.

In a report presented on this issue by the Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres over the name of the president, Ron Seguin, they point out that in 1999 there were 845,000 youth who were employed—and they define youth as 15 years to 24 years—constituting 15% of the entire workforce. Their unemployment rate is two and a half times that for adults, and their rate of union coverage is only one third of what it is for the general adult population. For those who can think back to your first job—and the younger you were, then the more this would apply—you can remember how nervous you were, how much you wanted to fit in, how much you wanted to be able to perform the task, that you wanted your employer to feel like you were an important part of the organization. You know, you're really keyed up, with very little—probably no—experience to fall back on. A lot of young people are scared. The first time the boss talks to them, they're really scared because they have no experience. They don't know what to expect. A lot of them can't afford to lose their jobs either and they think, "This is a horrible, crappy job and I've got one

miserable SOB for a boss, but it's work. If I can hang in here long enough, it's helping me to pay for my university. I'm building a better life, so I'll just tough it out."

The other thing I need to mention in this case is a lot of them don't have an appreciation of what their rights are. Having had no experience in the workplace, really how would the average person know what their health and safety rights are, or their fundamental rights under the Employment Standards Act, again underscoring the importance of this legislation, because if you don't have a union, it's this law only that you have. But they may not understand, they may not have had experience, so they may agree to things they wouldn't otherwise. That's why when we see a young person, as we've seen in this province, who goes to work on their first day on the job and they die, our hearts are just ripped out of our chests, because the first thing you think is almost like, what chance did they have? What preparation do we do?

For all the hundreds of thousands of hours of work that some of the government members seem to be pointing to when they talk about how the world is fine and everybody gets stock options and bonuses etc, for all of those, I would ask government members, how many young people dying on the job makes that OK?

Mr O'Toole: None.

Mr Christopherson: None. Exactly right. Why are you bringing in a law that waters down the rights of very vulnerable people?

Hon Mr Stockwell: We aren't.

Mr Christopherson: The minister, right on cue. Thank you. That was good. You couldn't have answered at a better time if I'd asked you to. He said none. And why? Because he'll say nobody has to do this. You've got to love it. There's a law here and the main argument the minister has for assuring people they have nothing to worry about is that you don't have to say yes to that law.

1710

Let me say this: I've heard the minister, not recently, but in other places, give examples; he did when I made the presentation in Ottawa in September on what our caucus thinks about the white paper he put out. He talked about certain circumstances where this kind of flexibility, he believed, makes sense. I would have to say that those are examples, some of them, that I wouldn't have a disagreement with. He said—I won't go into the details; I don't have that much time—"I've got situation A and the law, as it exists, either prohibits it or builds in a process of red tape that makes this an illogical situation, forcing people to do or not do things that they should otherwise, if you looked at it from a common sense point of view." I don't think there are very many, but if there are, just about anything can be accommodated in law where you're trying to deal with specifics. You can name those specifics and you can build in the protection and/or, in this case, the allowability of something to be done.

What you don't do is rip the whole thing wide open so that millions of people are left vulnerable to working 60 hours a week, or having their overtime pay averaged over

four weeks so they don't get any, or having their day off every week taken away—and that's exactly what this law does. That's not what you do. That's not how you solve problems.

And that's the best-case scenario. The worst-case scenario is that you know that and you're using it as a red herring to detract from the fact that this is going to be very well received by your employer friends.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: The minister says, "Rhetoric and hyperbole." His isn't, when he says he looks forward to clause-by-clause and he wants amendments and, "We're always open to discussion." When all of that equals one hour, his isn't rhetoric. When I'm pointing to specifics that are in this law, as you have drafted them, somehow I'm being rhetorical.

The fact of the matter is that yes, technically people can say no. What a way to pass a law. "This law is horrible, but I put a clause in there that said that people could say no to the horrible parts." Our argument is that there are people who are vulnerable who are not going to be protected; or if there are people this is meant to help, it's inadvertently—and I don't buy that—damaging the rights of millions of people. That's what's going on.

It says in here that you will now average overtime over four weeks. If you work 40 hours one week, 40 hours the next, 54 the next week and 40 the next week, you lose 12 hours of premium pay.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: "If you agree to it," the minister heckles, not from his seat.

That's his best answer to horrible legislation: "They don't have to agree to the horrible parts." It's like you're standing in a foyer and all the doors are horrible but you don't have to move if you don't want to. But he says you can say no. First of all, people who say no too often, I suggest and the NDP suggest, ultimately are going to pay for that lack of co-operation by not getting the good jobs, not getting the best shifts, not getting training and ultimately not being employed in that workplace. That's the reality, that's the real world out there.

Now, if someone—

Hon Mr Stockwell: The reality is, he gets thrown in jail.

Mr Christopherson: Minister, I didn't heckle you, which was very difficult for me.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The minister knows that he's not in his chair. If he wishes to participate, he'd better get to his own chair; and he knows that heckling is out of order in any event.

Mr Christopherson: Or just us give us all more time to debate this and he can heckle all he wants. But when things are limited like this, at least let me get my argument out, given that I let him do the same.

I'm suggesting that there is no one in their right mind who, if their employer approaches them and says, "I know you're going to work some overtime in the next few weeks, but if we calculate it the right way, you don't have to receive the time-and-a-half money. So what do

you say, buddy, that we engage the clause that says we can do the averaging? What do you say we do that? Sound like a good idea to you? Sounds like a good idea to me. Why don't we do that?" would be crazy enough to say yes. Who? I'm not hearing anything. They wanted to heckle before. They don't want to heckle when I ask them a question. Nobody, that's who. Nobody's going to say, "Yes, please take my overtime pay away from me."

So that leaves only two explanations. Either there are scenarios where—I can't imagine what they are, but just for the sake of debate there may be some arrangement of circumstances where that makes sense. More likely they've agreed to it because they don't know they don't have to or they're too afraid to say no. Young kids, one income, English not your first language, or maybe you're a young person. You've just finished a whole period of being unemployed and now you've got a job. You are not going to quickly say no to your employer. You know what? Under this law you'd be saying it an awful lot because the employer has so many rights here that the only thing they need is your silence.

Anybody who knows anything about the real world knows that intimidation in a non-democratic workplace—I already, the last time I spoke, pointed to decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada that have talked about the fact that the workplace is not a democracy and how few rights and influence an individual isolated in a workplace has. That's what's going to happen. So why aren't you standing up and speaking out for those constituents?

I come back again and say that if there are certain circumstances where there needs to be some flexibility, then let's be very specific, let's identify them and make sure that passageway is very narrow. But that's not what you've done and I don't believe that you had any intention to do it. This is so open to abuse. You say people don't have to work a 60-hour workweek. Why did you even put it in there? The last time that an Ontario law said 60 hours was under the Master and Servant Act of 1884. That's the last time any law showed 60 hours.

It's there for a reason. It's to be used. It's to tell those employers that are so inclined—and I hope it's not a lot but we don't know for sure. I can tell you, when the OFL ran the bad boss hotline, it made you wonder just how many are out there. But this is a green light to them: go ahead. Why would anybody do that? Listen, if you can get an employee to work 12 hours and the law says you don't have to pay them overtime any more, but under the old law you had to, guess what? You're going to think this is a good law.

Tommy Douglas would tell you this was a law written by cats.

Mr O'Toole: What? I need a little explanation.

Mr Christopherson: Forget it, John, you wouldn't understand it. It's a good law for cats, Tommy. You got it right. It doesn't matter whether it's white cats, black cats, striped cats, it's a law for cats. It's just that the majority are not cats, are they, John?

The fact is that we're going to have people so stressed out that there are going to be more accidents. There was a truck driver—it's been mentioned in this place—in Sudbury not that long ago who was so tired from working overtime that there was an accident. People died. If your job is on the line, you're not thinking about yourself, you're thinking about your family, and that's why we're saying to you that this is not a family-friendly bill. It's quite the opposite. You're replacing a law that says, for instance, you're guaranteed one day off in a week. Now it's two days but not until two weeks. How is that a benefit? How is that a benefit to anybody?

1720

You're talking about the family-parental leave under crisis leave. Again, it's a fine idea, but why didn't you go all the way and make sure all Ontarians have the same rights? You've discriminated against anybody who works in a workplace with less than 50 people, because they don't have the right. Somehow, they're expected to say "no" to their sick child in terms of taking them to the hospital and "yes" to the boss to be at work or work overtime. That's what you've done and that seems to be OK.

Mr O'Toole: You've got it all wrong, David.

Mr Christopherson: I hear the member from Durham babbling away about, "No Dave, you've got it wrong." I didn't hear anything in his speech that dealt directly with the concerns that we have here.

I raised the point the other day—it was an example of what needs to be looked at in committee and it's something that's very disconcerting if it's true—that the way the law is now written, there's a possibility that 10 days off becomes the ceiling, and that anything beyond that becomes legal grounds for an employer to dismiss someone.

Now, that may not be the case, because again it depends on one's interpretation, but two things stand out: one, we're not going to get a chance to talk about it in committee, so we won't really know for sure. Or if we did talk about that one, there's a whole host of other questions that we'd like to raise that aren't going to get addressed. Secondly, nobody thought it was important enough, out of all the government members who have spoken so far, including the minister, to say anything about it—not a word.

Does that mean I'm correct? Of course, it's legal people advising me. They've got concerns about the wording. I'm not a lawyer. But I have an obligation to raise that point and I did and I hear nothing back. What does that tell me? I guess it tells me, "Wait and see."

Wait and see is not much of an answer for people who may be putting their jobs on the line. This government talked about the fact—the minister in particular today talked about, "Bring in what you'd like to do. You never say what you'd like to do."

Well, we just spent a whole day not long ago, on an NDP opposition day, talking about exactly what we would do if this were our bill or if we had influence on its outcome. The first thing we'd do is raise the minimum

wage to \$7.50 so that it's at least at par with where the US minimum wage is.

This bill, Bill 147, is the vehicle by which we raise the minimum wage. The minimum wage is \$6.85. If you were going to raise it, you'd have done it in this bill. Nothing. None of you have said anything about it. I wonder why. You say this bill is going to help people. Then why won't you give the people who earn the least amount in our entire society and have not had a raise in five years a piece of the action in terms of the boom that's out there? Why? If this is such a great bill for working people, where's their share? The United States has had two increases since we, the NDP, last increased the minimum wage in 1995, and that's how it got to \$6.85. Twice the Americans have done it, and it's their economy that's leading ours. Yet you say it can't be afforded. I want to say that if we can't afford it in the good times, when are we ever going to expect it in the bad times?

Bring in a minimum wage that reflects the fact that it's people out there working every day who are creating this economic boom, not you folks and not others who are pushing buttons. It's somebody out there somewhere doing real work, and the only way they can get a raise is through this law. You say this is a great law, and it does nothing.

I started to say earlier about this subject that perhaps those who don't earn minimum wage—or maybe they're lucky; there's no one in their family or no one they know who makes minimum wage and they think, "I guess this isn't me." First of all, I'd say to you there were a lot of people who in 1995 looked at some of the early legislation this government brought in and said, "Well, it's not me, so I really won't get too involved. After all, it was only those poor people, where they cut their pay by 22%." A whole lot of folks, unfortunately, looked the other way, and that kept going on and on. You know what? There are not too many people left who haven't been gotten to. And people are realizing, "If it wasn't me yesterday and it isn't me today, it's going to be me tomorrow."

Further to that, if you think you could get a wage increase where you work, when the minimum wage is down so low, even if you're making really decent money, and without this dragging you down, you're kidding yourself. It's part of why they want the cost of labour low wherever they can control it. Because that influences whether nurses can get an increase, whether carpenters can get an increase—and yes, auto workers and steelworkers and the public sector. It's all connected. If you're not prepared to stand up and say to someone who doesn't have half of what you've got, "That's not right, and I'm willing to lend my voice to your cause," why should anybody care about your cause? What makes you so special?

Fortunately, that's not what built this province. What built this province and made it the great place to live that it is is that we do care about one another. That's why this

is such a bad, bad bill that hurts working people, because when you hurt some of us you hurt all of us.

I'll tell you what else you should have been doing. You should have said, at the very least, as the federal government and five other provinces have, "The work-week is 40 hours in the province of Ontario, and if you work one minute after 40 hours it's overtime," straight up. It would increase the income of those who are working overtime and it would also be an incentive for employers to, rather than have overtime, hire more people, which should be a priority of this government.

We've said to drop the 50 employees in terms of the parental leave, the family crisis. It shouldn't matter what your circumstances are at work if you've got a sick child you have to take to the doctor. End of discussion; beginning of your rights.

And something else you haven't talked about at all here: what about part-time employees? There are three times as many part-time employees now as there were in the 1970s; it's growing rapidly. By part-time, we mean permanent part-time, like Monday-Wednesday-Friday; or a short period of time; or a combination of both. A lot of young people don't have any hope for a job beyond the best personal contract they can get. But because the Employment Standards Act doesn't provide that they get dental, health care, insurance, medical benefits, drug plan, because it doesn't say that, it hardly exists in personal contracts, and the only part-timers who get them are those who work for unions where they've negotiated them into the collective agreement. What about those people? Where's their protection? Where's their advancement? Where's their piece of the great economic boom? We've said that those benefits ought to be pro-rated. So, should somebody who works two days a week get full pension benefits or full application? Ideally that might be the case, but initially we're saying the fundamental minimum law ought to be that it's pro-rated, so that if you work two days a week you're getting two days worth of medical benefits, drug plan benefits, dental benefits, pension benefits tied to pension portability. You start doing those kinds of things and guess what? We start bringing a whole lot of people into the tent who are now being left outside the tent. We're not even having that discussion, because there wasn't one suggestion in this bill that speaks to part-time workers. And because you've shut down debate, it's not going to get raised. But that's what you wanted, and that brings us to this time allocation motion in front of us.

We've had demonstrations—

Mr O'Toole: You've got one minute left.

Mr Christopherson: I know. That's what you do; you watch the clock and try to shut down your critics. You don't want to listen. There was a good demonstration on Saturday with a lot of people out there protesting what's going on and demanding public hearings. There have been people who care so passionately—some of them students, some of them labour leaders who aren't directly involved in this, who were there lending the cause—who occupied a number of ministers' offices or constituency

offices, demanding public hearings. I know the minister has been inundated with letters and e-mail and phone calls, and probably so have the backbenchers. Instead, we get silence just like this—silence. Use the rules as you've changed them to ram things through, shut down the critics, and when we get close to Christmas just ram that good old legislation right through there and right past the public. That's the game plan, just ram this sucker through.

1730

Mr Parsons: I am pleased I have the opportunity to speak to this bill, but at the same time I regret that I'm having to do it because what it is doing is limiting the debate on it. I appreciate the member for Brant with his research that shows that this government has limited the debate on 20 occasions. The reason they limit debate is not so they don't hear me and they don't hear the other members in this caucus; it's so they don't hear the people of Ontario speak with what they want.

The intriguing thing is there is a sense with limiting debate that this must be a really important bill that has to be passed and get into place. Yet the people who come and talk to me in my riding are talking about health care, or the lack of it; they're talking about the crisis in education; they're talking about the underfunding of the access centres, providing home supports. No one yet has come to my office and said, "You know, I need to be able to work my employees 60 hours," or employees saying, "I want to work 60 hours." It's not an issue that has been out on the streets that is of such magnitude that it requires the rushing through of this legislation. So I'm intrigued at the approach that it's so important and yet it's not important enough to listen to the public on it.

The role of the government is to listen to all sides and compromise. Every piece of legislation should be such that all parties that are affected by it feel that in some way they have made a gain and that it is a solution they can live with. This government seems to think that running government is final offer selection: we'll listen to the working people, we'll listen to the companies, we'll take this one.

I certainly have not had any sense that the workers of Ontario—the hard-working people of Ontario—support this. To make 60 hours possible, the explanation is given to us that, "Right now it's done under a permit system and we're giving away so many permits that we might as well legalize it by making it 60 hours."

There was a reason for the permits being required, and that reason was an understanding and acceptance that people shouldn't work that many hours for a vast number of reasons. To take and make it simpler is contrary to the original purpose when they brought in the need for a permit. People should not have to work 60 hours. People worked 60 hours a week during World War II, in 1944 when there was a labour shortage. There isn't a labour shortage in this province right now, except in nurses who have gone to the States—or have been driven to the States—but we have people looking for work at the same time we are asking others to work 60 hours.

We're hearing over and over, "It will be voluntary." There are good employers in this province where this bill will present no change in working conditions to employees, but there are some employers who are not good employers. I would suggest an employer that's moving into the not-good-employer category is the government of Ontario with what they're doing to jail guards, what they're doing to driving exam testers and what they've done to people who do maintenance on highways. This government itself has not been responsible to its employees and should not present itself as role model for other employers.

I absolutely believe that the majority of employees in this province, when asked if they can work overtime or work 60 hours, will have very little choice but to go ahead. If it doesn't cost them their job in the short run, it will certainly cost them advancement in the long term. It is not going to be as simple as they present it, that they can simply say no.

And all too often, the individuals who will be forced to work these hours are young people just starting a family. They need the money for a mortgage or they need the money for the young children, yet I would suggest that at the same time as they need the money for the young children, they need to spend the time with their young children. Every study ever done has shown that the best investment we can make in our children is to give them time when they're young. This takes them away and in fact brings home very tired parents who are not able to have quality time with their children.

Our leader, Dalton McGuinty, has used a phrase, that we live with "just-in-time" families, and I know he is bang on. Many families are one paycheque away from crisis; they're one daycare provider away from crisis, and for them to have to increase their hours makes life intolerable rather than better. But what we're seeing is some lip service to it by having part of the bill contain the maternity leave. It has been said by speakers prior to me that this clause is being held hostage by the other. If I vote against this, then I must be against the extended maternity leave; if I vote for it, then it infers I'm in agreement with the 60-hour week. I have very little choice but to vote against it. The maternity leave, if they truly believe in its worth, if they truly believe families should have that bonding time, should have been moved as a separate bill. Rather, we're seeing the Americanization of Ontario politics, where the Americans have for years inserted various and sundry clauses into another bill that had no relevance. The maternity leave is the opportunity for this province to do the right thing and allow families to have the bonding and nurturing time that will pay off for the lifetime of that child.

Rather than that, they're putting forward a bill that deters job creation, the very opposite of what they purport to support. Someone working 60 hours is in fact taking 20 hours of a job that someone else could do. The world trend is to fewer hours. We're doing the opposite in this province in looking for more hours out of our employees, at the expense of health and safety. I know

that someone having worked 60 hours is probably a hazard on the road driving home at the end of each day.

With the overtime, if the overtime isn't a problem—and again, I hear from the government side that this really isn't a big change in overtime: rather than overtime kicking in after 44 hours, overtime will kick in, but it can be averaged over four weeks. If it's not going to change anything, then why does this legislation change it? Obviously, it is an opportunity for an employer—and again, not every employer, but some employers will be able to take advantage of that fact. By having an employee, for example, work 56 hours one week and then 40 hours each of the following three weeks, over that four-week period there will be no overtime triggered. So that individual has been away from their family, away from their children, for 16 hours extra in that one week, and no overtime is attributed to the extra energies and efforts they're putting into it.

There is a reason. This government doesn't pass legislation just because it's something to do. There is a reason for this averaging over four weeks, and the reason is, in all likelihood, to take the lowest-paid individuals in Ontario and rob them of that extra compensation for those tremendously extra hours they put into it. It's fundamentally wrong.

Vacation time can be fragmented. In this province, without a collective agreement an individual is entitled to two weeks and two weeks only of vacation. Given the number of hours they can now work—and I'm not sure two weeks away is adequate vacation if one's allowed to work 60 hours—the employer is able to fragment that, and say, "You get every Monday afternoon off and every Tuesday afternoon, and there's a day; that's how you can do your vacation." That's not time with the family. It is wrong that they are going to permit this time to be broken up.

In the emergency leave, the 10 days is a wonderful start. It never existed before, so I have to say congratulations on bringing that forward. But why is it more an issue now than it was before? I receive significant numbers of calls and contacts from letters and people on the street who share with me how terribly underfunded their community access centre is. There are patients being discharged from hospitals far sooner than they should be; there are seniors who are home who require far more hours than this government is prepared to fund—individuals who have paid taxes all their life and now are receiving inadequate services, not because the access centres want to do it, but because of the gross underfunding of it.

There is a need created by this government for individuals to be able to spend time with their families, to support them, because the government has abdicated their role in this. Is 10 days enough? No, I don't think so. It may be, in some cases, and it is a wonderful start. But they need to recognize that the crisis they have created in health care is causing a burden on employees who need to be away from their employer from periods of time to

provide the supports that they've already paid for through their tax dollars.

This is overall a bad bill, and this is an unnecessary bill. The system wasn't broken. There's always a need to tweak it, but not a need to completely gut it. I have no choice but to oppose this bill.

1740

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): The few minutes I have give me an opportunity first to protest this very undemocratic bill that has been put forward by the Conservative Party, the government of the day. But again it's no surprise, the way they go about business in this very undemocratic way. As a matter of fact, they would limit any kind of intelligent discussion—this is about limiting any sort of public input into it—and the necessary things that they continue to do.

I'm going to try to cover quickly some things that may affect my constituents in Scarborough-Rouge River. There are many people in Scarborough-Rouge River who work in downtown Toronto, for instance. Many who come to work have to be at work, say, at 9 o'clock. They leave home at 6:30 in the morning, some in order to take their children to daycare, get into the subway and be down here for 9 o'clock, just about making it. As you can see, that is almost two hours, before they start working, just transporting to work or also getting their kids to daycare. The same individuals would be leaving at 5 o'clock in the afternoon and not getting back home until 7:30 or 8 o'clock at night. Work has taken most of their time away from their family, but they have to deal with that. They need the resources to pay their rent, buy their food and what have you and have some sort of status in society.

This government now has moved forward, and you would feel that the Minister of Labour would be in the balance for them representing labour, both employer and employee, but again this imbalance act has complete disregard for those in the workforce who are working. The minister gets rather excited about things at times and feels that only when he says something does it make sense, that not any input from other individuals in the workforce but his is right.

What this has done is deprived individuals of quality of life. Many mothers, many parents, today would like to be home with their kids, to help with their homework, simple things like that, to be there for challenges in adolescence, for teenagers who would like to see their parents around. But many parents come home and are extremely tired and not able to even offer that sort of quality way of life.

This government has complete disregard for that. All they would like to do is put power in the hands of the employer, who will then say, "I need that power in order that if I call upon the individuals to work 60 hours, I have it there." Things are going very well. This is the same government that brags about a great economy that is going very well, but they would like to put some more power in their hands.

There are areas in this bill that I would like to spend days on in debate, and individuals outside: the area of equal pay for work of equal value. I can't even believe that the Conservative government would have put this in, because they're the ones who shy away from it, run away from it. My great friends from the NDP would like to defend this too. As I looked at it, I said, "My golly, I see some exemptions here again about seniority." I would have loved to spend some time debating the inequity and the fact that seniority itself will play a prominent role. These are things that people would like to put on the record to tell you that the bill is not right; the bill needs to be corrected.

I feel, each day when I come into this House and speak on any legislation, like I'm speaking to a wall over there. The Conservative Party is like a wall: they have no emotions, no sort of response to any needs that individuals have outside. They turn their backs and show a wall to the people they would serve, and then maybe look at the corporate enterprise and say, "We'll listen to you. Tell us what you want and we'll respond." The individuals who are more or less subject to the abuse of any legislation do not get a chance to put forward their points of view. Of course they would say, "We have limited time. We must say as much as we can at this moment."

I, for one, standing up here, don't feel I will convince this government, this minister or anyone over there. They've already gotten their marching orders, they've already gotten their pay. They've also got their title and figure, "If I rock the boat, I may not have my chauffeur, I may not have my salary, so I'll just go along with what has been said." Nothing at all.

Then one would want to believe outside there that democracy is alive and well. Far from that, Mr Speaker. I know that as you sit there and listen to both sides of it, you wonder yourself if there is any change. You know, some of the folks who had the opportunity to be in the gallery today are also affected by this. They feel completely helpless. They see a government that is listless or won't respond at all to their needs. They feel somehow, "What is going on? Is this democracy? Is this where the members on the opposition side would like to put something forward so they could have some debate, some consultation, some committee hearings?" But no, this government will not do so.

I would say that of those who have run out of patience, that people like the people in the gallery and people outside who are listening would say, "It's hopeless." There's something called an election. Some time, with a little patience, we'll throw these chaps out and make sure we have some people who will listen. I saw the Minister of Community and Social Services—who's supposed to be defending the most vulnerable in our society? Get off of those backdrops with syringes and saying that this is all they're all about, that all they do is get their money and put their syringes in their body and that they're on drugs all day. That's the sort of individuals who are advocating for us.

The Minister of Labour, who's supposed to be advocating for those in the labour market and those who are working hard, is saying "Go for it. We're going to give you 60 hours more work and it's not going to hurt you one bit." Then, when we were fighting here for parental leave, the same individuals here fought like mad to keep it out. "No way," they said. And when the federal government brought it forward, they said, "What an opportunity. We will just sham the old thing, slide it in here and say we'll go for it, then slide the other undemocratic process inside of here and say, 'Aren't we good?'" And then they said, "Let see if those individuals on the other side will ever dare to turn this bill down, because we have parental leave in there, the good stuff they are fighting for." Let me tell you, we can see through you all. Many of the people outside have seen through you very clearly.

They have seen through the ministers who are here and say they are advocating on their behalf. They know who they represent. They don't represent the real people. They don't represent all people, because I also say the corporations aren't real people. They don't represent all people at all. They make sure that their big corporate buddies are represented, and to hell with the rest.

Most laws are like that. They have a face on them that looks so good and inside that law is filled with all sorts of inadequacies: inadequate process, unrepresentative process of life. The individuals here are saying, "What's going on here?"

So I have no hope at all that my speech and many of the speeches here today will change one iota of these individuals who will put this legislation through. They will not listen. There are no amendments to it. Gone are the days when people would say, "Listen, the law is stupid, what the ministers put forward, and we will put rational argument behind and show where the stupidity is, and then they'll come to their senses and change it." No, they will not. They will not listen. They will, of course, as some of the members in the gallery said today, sign their Christmas cards. They'll ignore all of this. They'll heckle as we go along. The questions we ask over here are irrelevant. We must have the options for them, the alternatives. I heard the minister saying, "Where are the alternatives you're putting forward?" When we do put it forward, he laughs.

He laughs, because he doesn't see beyond his nose. He doesn't see beyond what Mike Harris told him. He doesn't see beyond the wild right-wing theory that they put forward, and ignore those who need it. The 60 hours that people will be working, you will see a little more breakdown in the family, you will see all of the things that they are fighting for. The people who are on welfare and who they're pushing out there to work, they ask them to work longer, harder and for less. And they are asking, very much so, to break the family up.

They're asking, furthermore, that a family doesn't value—because their family value is, "We're going to put money in their pockets," and that's supposed to bring family values. It will not. What it has done is show up

this government as the most insensitive and somehow determined and undemocratic individuals in this country.

The Deputy Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate.

Mr Stockwell has moved government notice of motion number 84. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker: Clear the galleries. There will be a five-minute recess.

The House recessed from 1751 to 1756.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Stockwell has moved government notice of motion number 84.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1757 to 1807.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr Stockwell has moved government notice of motion number 84.

All those in favour will rise one at a time until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Harris, Michael D.	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Johns, Helen	Stewart, R. Gary
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, Bert	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Kells, Morley	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dunlop, Garfield	Klees, Frank	Turnbull, David
Ecker, Janet	Marland, Margaret	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Maves, Bart	Wood, Bob
Galt, Doug	Mazzilli, Frank	Young, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.	
Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley
Bountrogianni, Marie	Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Gerretsen, John	Ramsay, David
Caplan, David	Hampton, Howard	Ruprecht, Tony
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Smitherman, George
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 25.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1809.

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Monday 11 December 2000

Lundi 11 décembre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 11 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 11 décembre 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SOCIAL HOUSING REFORM ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA RÉFORME DU LOGEMENT SOCIAL

Mr Coburn, on behalf of Mr Clement, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act respecting social housing / Projet de loi 128, Loi concernant le logement social.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Could you tell me if we have a quorum present, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): No, I can't, but I'll ask the table.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if it's a point of order to point out that there are only two Liberals in the house, and no NDP members.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Brian Coburn (Ottawa-Orléans): I believe we have unanimous consent to divide this evening's debate equally between all three caucuses, that we forgo questions and comments and that at the end of the evening the question shall be put.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? It is agreed.

I recognize the member for Ottawa-Orléans for debate.

50

Mr Coburn: Today I move third reading of Bill 128, the Social Housing Reform Act. This act, if passed, would fulfill the government's commitment to transfer social housing administration to the local level in order to build better communities in Ontario.

In 1997, we committed to restructuring provincial and municipal responsibilities to put services into the hands of the most appropriate level of government. We said then, as we say now and continue to believe, that social housing is a service that belongs at the local level.

Local governments are best positioned to respond to the local housing needs of their communities. They are the level of government that should be dealing with the

bricks and mortar of programs such as social housing. In fact, municipalities have been paying for this program since 1998, and during that time the province has continued to administer the social housing program on their behalf. This bill proposes to give municipalities the say to go along with the pay. What's more, the Social Housing Reform Act would allow municipalities to integrate the administration of social housing with Ontario Works, child care and other social services which they deliver. By integrating these services, municipalities would serve their clients more effectively and more efficiently.

I want to emphasize that the province has taken every precaution to make sure tenants are protected throughout the entire transfer and beyond. Provincial standards would ensure that service levels, eligibility and benefits would continue much the same as they are today. I specifically want to emphasize that rents geared to income will continue to be set at 30% of income. All households in need would continue to be eligible to apply for social housing regardless of where they live in the province. There would be no decline in the number of households assisted or the number of units modified for people with physical disabilities.

If this legislation is passed, municipalities would manage and operate their own social housing portfolios, so that they would be able to provide better service to those in need more efficiently. The province would be out of the business of administering social housing but would maintain a role in setting and monitoring province-wide standards. These standards would ensure, as I've already stated, that there are province-wide rules on eligibility and benefit levels and that the number of households receiving assistance, as well as the supply of units modified for the physically disabled, are maintained.

Standards further ensure there is compliance with the terms of the federal-provincial social housing agreement and that appropriate reporting procedures are in place. The province would also maintain responsibility for mortgage renewals in the non-profit and co-op portfolio, manage the default risk and transfer federal funds to the local level.

I'd like to take a moment to describe how the legislation proposes to transfer these programs to the municipalities. We propose a two-stage transfer. The province would devolve the public housing stock, as well as commercial rent supplement units, as a complete business on January 1, 2001. Responsibility for administering non-profit and co-operative programs would follow over an 18-month period. Our goal is to have the public housing

transfer take place at the start of the new year, and we propose to give municipalities control of both the property management business and the properties. Municipalities would immediately have the say for pay for which they have been asking. Their experience with the public housing business will help them as they plan to take over the remaining non-profit portfolio. The employees working for the existing local housing authorities would be transferred to newly created local housing corporations. This would give them the necessary expertise to operate the housing units and to minimize disruption to the tenants throughout the entire transfer.

The transfer of administrative responsibility for co-ops and non-profit housing would be completed within 18 months of proclamation. The proposed legislation would simplify the administration of non-profit and co-op housing by replacing a number of different operating agreements for provincially led programs with one consistent accountability framework. Under the new funding model set out in the proposed legislation, non-profit and co-op housing providers would be given a fixed level of subsidy within which they'd be required to operate. Providers would gain more autonomy, funding predictability and streamlined accountability. The roles and the responsibilities of non-profit and co-operative housing providers as landlords would remain essentially the same, and communities could continue to rely on the talents and the dedication of volunteer boards to oversee these projects. Roles and responsibilities and operating agreements of federal providers would not change. That is a provision, of course, through the province's agreement with the federal government.

Since this government announced its intention to realign local services in 1997, we have worked diligently in two particularly key areas. First, we have sought and found efficiencies in the current programs so that we can assure municipalities that we're handing over the most cost-effective program possible. Over the past few years, the government has also achieved tremendous savings in social housing costs, in fact more than \$100 million worth, which have been passed on to municipalities. These savings were found through efficiencies and lower mortgage rates.

Secondly, we have had extensive productive discussions with stakeholders and looked at all possible options around how to bring in a better social housing system. Two government-appointed advisory bodies heard from tenants, municipalities, providers and other stakeholders across the entire province. What they told us is reflected in the proposed legislation that is before the House today. That was an extensive consultation that not only assures us that we have designed a system that will work for the future but also makes us confident that we will manage the transition to municipal administration smoothly.

Our consultations with stakeholders continued during the period following the introduction of Bill 128, including the committee hearings in late November and early December. Stakeholders have brought a number of good points to our attention and we have made some amend-

ments to the bill to ensure that it is clear and consistent with our policy intent. Members opposite participated that process—enthusiastically, I might add.

In particular, the stakeholders told us that Bill 128 would have resulted in the termination of current arrangements for access to supportive housing without providing assurance that a better system would be in place. We heard this concern and we've responded with amendments to allow existing systems to continue until a better, more coordinated system has been fully developed. We've also added some additional amendments that would streamline the process for social housing transfer, give service managers more flexibility to restructure local housing corporations, improve the subsidy model for non-profit and co-op housing providers and clarify the overall intent of the bill.

Much has been said about the cost of social housing and the municipal ability to manage these costs. The legislation would give the municipalities the resources and the flexibility to manage the future risks through the flowing of federal funding and the transfer of public housing stock and the administrative flexibility. If the legislation is passed, each of the 47 service managers would get a share of the funds slated for that purpose under Ontario's social housing agreement with the federal government. By transferring the ownership of public housing, the province is providing municipalities with a substantial asset with a value in the billions of dollars.

I want to say very clearly—very clearly—that the public housing stock is well maintained and is kept in a good state of repair. That's not just the government's opinion. That's the opinion of two separate independent studies. Time, of course, doesn't permit me to address them here in detail, but they are available on our ministry's Web site, www.mah.gov.on.ca. I invite members opposite to check out that Web site.

As I said, the cost of these programs has been reduced substantially since local services realignment was announced. In addition, the province has developed mechanisms to take advantage of economies of scale for province-wide mortgage renewals and group insurance, and has been working with the housing stakeholders on a plan for pooling of the capital reserves. These and other cost saving measures, and the reform of social housing programs, should ensure that municipalities do have the ability to cover the costs of social housing.

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The province also proposes to provide one-time funding of \$58 million. This is to be distributed among federal, unilateral and public housing projects to supplement or create reserve funds to deal with future capital funding needs.

We also recognize that there are transition costs associated with taking on the administration of social housing. We propose to provide significant transition funding in fact more than \$13 million, to help municipalities with these one-time costs.

In closing, the bill before the Legislature puts a vital service in the hands of those best positioned to deliver

We are confident that municipal governments will rise to the challenge and become effective and efficient administrators of Ontario's social housing portfolio. In fact, it does build upon the innovative cost-effectiveness and superb management of the municipal sector.

Mr Caplan: On behalf of the people of Don Valley East, I rise to participate in the debate on Bill 128. It's not with any joy or happiness, because I've got to tell you, Speaker, and all members of the Legislature, that this is bad policy. It's bad legislation. It will have incredibly serious effects for municipal taxpayers, for housing residents, for people on waiting lists. It is the wrong direction that we should be going for housing in the province of Ontario.

It's very clear that outside, third-party commentators have taken a look at the Harris government housing policies. I cite you the example of Mr Ibbitson, columnist in the *Globe and Mail*—certainly not a supporter of the liberals or New Democratic Party—when he says that the Harris government housing policies have been a clear and utter failure. This is an example of what's gone wrong.

I would bring to the attention of the parliamentary assistant, and all members of this Legislative Assembly, a recent market survey which came out from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. In their survey they were talking about rental housing, and that would include social housing, talking about vacancy rates, what's available out there for people across Ontario.

The member from Ottawa-Orléans, the parliamentary assistant, I know, would want to take a moment and talk to this House about the deplorable state of housing vacancy in the city of Ottawa itself, a 0.2% vacancy rate. Just so that everybody understands, for every 1,000 housing units that are available out there, two are vacant. To give you some indication, to have a competitive housing market, you would need 30 vacant units; there are two.

It is as a direct result of the Harris government housing policies that we find ourselves in this state of crisis, and the offloading, the downloading of housing responsibility from the province government on to municipal governments, and I would add that I am not aware of any other place in the world which has taken this extraordinary step of transferring housing authority from a state level on to a municipal level.

In fact, I have not found one—not one—outside party who will validate what this government is doing for their housing policies, not one person to say that this is the right direction. Their own advisers—David Crombie, head of their Who Does What panel, their disentanglement exercise; municipal leaders; housing providers; members of the Legislature—have all consistently said, "this is bad policy, it is the wrong direction, it is a huge stake," and for some very significant and important reasons. It makes the creation of new housing supply, something that we are in dire need of in Ontario, virtually impossible. It will do nothing to alleviate the enormous waiting lists that are out there. In the city of Toronto alone, we have 60,000 people on waiting lists to get into

assisted housing. In fact, this bill, Bill 128, will have a significant impact on housing providers.

Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal party oppose this bill. It's a mistake; it's wrong. We often have discussions here in this chamber, in this Legislature, about significant matters of public policy. There's always a matter of disagreement, but on this one there's unanimity. Everyone, every commentator, says it is a significant error, it is a mistake, it is the wrong thing to do to place the financial burden for housing on the municipal level. I'm shocked, with so many former municipal politicians, that people don't or won't stand up and do the right thing and vote against this bill.

This bill is simply a piece of "trust me" legislation. It is about 130 pages, but most of the bill is contained in the back, just slipped in there. It's all in regulation. In fact, you heard the parliamentary assistant say, "We'll do this," and, "We'll protect that," and, "The tenants will be protected and the rent-geared-to-income levels will be protected." Nothing could be further from the truth. We have his say-so. I would say the parliamentary assistant is an honourable man. But it's not contained in Bill 128.

What is contained in Bill 128 are sections which say that the minister may make a decision; he may do something. He's giving himself the power and authority. But there is no guarantee; there isn't anything ironclad in legislation. In fact, this is a bizarre piece of legislation, because while the provincial government is saying they want to get out of housing, their tentacles are so wrapped around various areas of housing policy as to make it difficult to understand where the provincial government's role begins and where it ends. You see, what they've done is they've taken all authority and they've said, "We're going to put it in the hands of municipalities to finance. We're going to have some standards and some other things that we want to apply," but they also have areas where they've said that municipalities are going to have the ability to override provincial standards.

I don't know if you're aware of any other piece of legislation, any other law, where a municipal standard can override a provincial standard. I defy any member of this government to show me one, because I haven't found it yet. That is shocking and it is wrong and it's the wrong direction.

Over five hours of public hearings, we heard 18 groups, individuals and organizations which came forward and said they had significant problems with Bill 128. There were over 800 who were turned away, not given an opportunity to speak, not heard by this government. They have no interest in consulting, in talking, especially in listening.

Yes, I will acknowledge there were over 200 amendments presented at committee. I presented over 80 myself. Over 100 were adopted by the committee, and I would say that any effort to make a bad piece of legislation better should be supported. But Bill 128 is a disaster waiting to happen.

I want to talk about a few items in the very limited amount of time that I have. We heard the parliamentary

assistant talk about the condition of the social housing stock. The member is being very creative when he wants to suggest that everything is in good shape, there's no need to worry. "Trust me," says Minister Clement, says the parliamentary assistant. Frankly, the only true measure that exists out there, the only technical audits that have been done, have been done in the region of Peel. Their conclusions are startling: \$57 million is required for long-term capital replacement and costs associated with fixing up the social housing stock in Peel alone. If you extrapolate that across the province, and we heard this in committee, it's a grand total of \$1 billion being forced from provincial responsibility on to municipal responsibility.

I want to read you a section of the act, and I would like all members to understand what's happening. Subsection 46(1): "Despite any other act, a transferor does not make any covenant, representation or warranty, and no covenant, representation or warranty on the part of the transferor"—that's the province—"shall be implied or deemed to have been made in respect of any asset, liability, right, obligation or employee transferred from the transferor by a transfer order."

In subsection 2 it goes further: "A transferor is not liable to any person for the state of repair of an asset transferred by a transfer order and is not liable to any person to fix such an asset, despite a requirement otherwise imposed by another act or a rule of law."

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So if things are in such great shape, as Minister Clement and Parliamentary Assistant Coburn say, why is there a need for this section? Why does section 46 exist? Because they know full well that the social housing stock that they are transferring on to the backs of municipal taxpayers, on to the backs of businesses in the province of Ontario through the municipal tax system, is going to be a burden that is going to be very hard to bear, and they're getting out. They're getting out big time.

I've got to say I was really heartened by the words of Mayor Mel Lastman. He's a very courageous man, Mayor Lastman. He has stood up to Mike Harris, he has stood up to this government time and again, and he's called it like it is. A headline from the Toronto Sun: "Mayor Threatens Download Rebellion." From the National Post: "Mayor Threatens to Break Law over Housing Costs." "Won't Run Public Housing, City Council Tells Ontario." In Mayor Lastman's speech, he said that "the city cannot even inspect the housing stock that it is going to acquire." He says, "I find this insulting. I find this ridiculous. And I find the province completely obnoxious on this particular item." He says, and I have no reason not to believe him, that there's \$170 million in costs to the city of Toronto alone. I think he's probably low, because there's pooling in the GTA, and if you factor it across the entire GTA, it is considerably more.

The parliamentary assistant said, "Look at our Web site." What he didn't tell you was that he's referring to a 10% sampling of the public housing stock—10%—and even in the consultant's report it says that extreme

caution should be used in extrapolating this analysis to the entire public housing stock because there could be hidden liabilities and risks. He didn't want to tell you that. Instead, for the sake of having a message, having some kind of assurance and having section 46 of the act, the parliamentary assistant and the minister say, "Don't worry. Be happy. Everything is fine." I can tell you that it's not, and every member of this House who has even been to any of the housing projects that exist in any riding of the province will tell you that's simply not the case. I've been in contact with those housing authorities. I've been to visit many of the housing projects. There is a real lack of dollars that the province needs to make available.

I was very interested in the comments of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario that the province should maintain a financial role in social housing to protect municipal taxpayers, safeguard the future of social housing and meet the demand of affordable housing.

The city of Toronto, region of York: "There is no provision for housing repair costs in the bill." It goes on, "In the absence of further due diligence and inspections, the province should retain liability for capital repair needed."

From Peel, Grey county, the association of chief administrative officers, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the region of York: there is a need for an offset of the financial risks to municipalities with the devolution of social housing. It's just a further scathing indictment of the downloading exercise, of the wrong-headed moves this government is making when it comes to housing.

You see, it doesn't stop there. I think that one of two things should happen. Either the province should do a complete assessment of the conditions of the housing stock at provincial expense—be honest for once with municipalities about the state of repair or disrepair, as the case may be—and commit the dollars past this year to correct any major issues that arise, or, second, the province can say, "OK, city of Toronto, the GTA region, Sudbury, Windsor, London," everywhere there's housing, and there's no corner of this province untouched, "do your own audits. Report your findings to us. If there are problems, we will set up a specific fund to address that. But they didn't do that."

I want to talk about the fact, as I mentioned earlier, that we have a crisis. We need to build more housing. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp says we need to build 20,000 units of rental housing per year in the province of Ontario alone. Since 1995, we've had about 8,000 units of housing—8,000 units since 1995. Consider that in that almost six-year period we required 120,000 units of housing, and the member for London-Fanshawe is quite correct: his constituents are not being served by the housing policies of the Harris government. I wish he would stand up to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and say, "We've got it wrong, guys. We've got to get back in the housing game. We have to put out

money where our mouth is," because they haven't done that. It's absolutely shocking.

I was really disappointed by the fact that this provincial government has skimmed money off the top from the federal-provincial agreement. It's sunk into the black hole of provincial finances, and that's very disappointing.

There are other problems, other issues. It's a massive bill. This is a massive undertaking and a lot to go through.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner says, "The bill contains provisions that open the door to the widespread, and inappropriate, sharing of sensitive personal information for purposes unrelated to the original reasons for collection, and without adequate notice and consent of the affected individual." Where have we heard that before? Didn't the Minister of Health just recently introduce legislation about people's medical records which could be shared? Hasn't the Attorney General also made similar provisions in one of his ridiculous pieces of legislation? This kind of stuff is important. People's rights are not something that should be trampled on this easily. There have to be firm protections.

"A potential result of the bill is the creation of a common database containing personal information collected by diverse program areas. This represents a step toward a centralized government database that may be used to profile individual citizens and their interactions with their government. The Information and Privacy Commissioner has consistently opposed the creation of such a database as a serious privacy breach."

In the United States we've seen this kind of profiling of the citizenry and the unequal treatment, the unequal access to justice, the unfair and abominable abuses that can occur. The Harris government is intent to walk down that road, intent to imbed these kinds of practices, foreign Canadian values, foreign to Ontario's values, into law and into administration. Shameful, I say.

There is much more in the legislation. It would take literally hours to go over it.

Interjection: So do it.

Mr Caplan: I would certainly love to, but I wanted to wait out another few areas.

The legislation is going to set up, and it makes a serious mistake when it sets up, 47 super bureaucracies, with another bureaucracy called the Social Housing Services Corp. The best housing that's out there is community-based. The co-op and non-profit housing is some of the best run, best maintained, and finest housing that you will find anywhere in this province.

Interjection.

Mr Caplan: The member for London-Fanshawe is quite incorrect. If you look, the province has now taken it over. They can appoint the directors of the board. It will be volunteers, as the parliamentary assistant said. It's farre. It is a throwback to an era when housing was run at a provincial level, when you created the kinds of massive housing projects out there. The community-based programs are the ones that have worked and have worked well. Bill 128, I fear, will be the death of these

kinds of housing projects which have worked well for all citizens of Ontario.

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I will wrap up at this point, reluctantly, just to say that this bill will result in a massive property tax increase for hard-working families in Ontario, for the business community in Ontario. This bill is only a framework. It's another Mike Harris Tory "trust me" bill and it will hinder the creation of new housing in Ontario. It will do nothing to alleviate the exploding waiting lists and will have a serious impact on housing providers. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party will be voting against this.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's a real pleasure to have a couple of minutes to speak on this bill.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Well, maybe a little more than a couple of minutes, because you need the time to be able to speak to these important bills. This is Bill 128, the download of housing not just to the municipality but to the property taxpayer. The property owner, that's whom we're downloading it to. Frank Mazzilli, you know that, but you're going to get an opportunity after to speak as to why that isn't so. But that's what Mike Harris, the Premier, is doing. He is downloading this responsibility to the municipality and then the municipality is going to have to download it to—guess whom? The property owner; he's going to have to pay for this. The property owner is saying, "I'm sick and tired of the load. I can't carry the load any more."

You remember when your Premier and others used to say, "There's only one taxpayer in the city of Toronto, in the province of Ontario, in this great Canada of ours. Only one"? Well, this property owner is saying, "Holy cow, I don't want to be the only one shouldering this one. I'm tired of the load. I don't want, as a property owner, to take on the responsibility of housing, take on the responsibility of transit." You know, the so-called Minister of Transportation doesn't have transit any more. All he's got is asphalt and a couple of highways. This guy just got out of the business of transit and transportation. He's just got highways and asphalt. That's all he's got. The rest he's given to Mel Lastman. The poor guy is off to Switzerland saying, "Holy cow, what am I going to do with this problem?"

He's going to Switzerland for a good reason: trying to get us the Olympics here, he said. Before he went, he said, "I've got a message for Mike Harris: You can keep the housing and you can keep the transit and you can have it all, because I don't want it." He doesn't want it, for a good reason.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): He wants education back?

Mr Marchese: No. Education was a good thing. You took half of the education portion out—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Frank, listen to me. Just listen for a couple of minutes. Education should not be on the property tax. It should not be. You were good, Frank. You

and Mike took half of it out of the property tax burden and that was good, and Mike Harris said, "Now we're helping the old ladies." But he didn't quite tell the old ladies and the old guys that what he did was to take half of the education portion out of the property tax base, but he then downloaded other things to the municipality so that poor old guy and the poor old woman still have a heavy load to carry. Here you take education out, but you now give them transportation and you give them more public health and you give them housing and you give them ambulances. You have given them so much to bear that by taking education out but downloading all these other responsibilities you, Mike, didn't help the old ladies and the old guys out there. You didn't.

That's what you said in the beginning. Remember? "We're helping the senior citizens because we're taking education out of property tax." But you burdened them with other social responsibilities and other social services, so how did you help them? Come on, something isn't right here. Someone's got to tell it the way it is. They, M. Taxpayer and M^{me} Taxpayer, did not do you any favours, did they? You didn't do them any favours, minister of Comsoc, did you? Because now they've got more of welfare, more of child care, all of transportation; they're getting all of housing, they're getting ambulances, they're getting the whole thing.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): What does the province do now?

Mr Marchese: I don't know what the province is doing. They're about to abdicate their entire responsibility because they're going to give it away to the city to manage. Pretty soon the city will manage the province. What is there left for the province if you're giving it all away to the cities? Mr Taxpayer, Madam Taxpayer, you've got it all on your shoulders. They're taking it all away. This non-government government is saying, "We don't want to manage any more and we're going to let Mel Lastman manage every one of the important services that pertain to the province." You're giving it all away.

These guys don't want to manage anything any more, except where they do want to manage it, like education, where they've centralized it, and they've centralized it for a reason. Mike Harris, the Premier, knows why he centralized it. He says at the Tuesday caucus meetings, "We've got a whole heap of money here that we can control. We'll take it out of the hands of the trustees. All of a sudden, we've got all these billions of dollars to play with. What we're going to do is this. Here's our game plan."

Here is the Premier. "We've got a good plan here. We're going to take education away from the trustees." Right, Mike? Tell me when I'm off base. "We're going to take education out of the hands of the trustees and we're going to control it. If we control it, all those dollars that board is going to spend will be in our hands. Then we'll chop away a couple of billion. But we can't tell the public that. We'll be able to chop away at least a billion, maybe a billion and a half."

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, you're not giving it to Mel. You're going to pretend you're going to give it away to the boards of education so that they have more money.

"Here's the game plan. We're going to say to the boards, 'You've got more money than you ever did before,' but in taking it over and centralizing it, we've got billions of dollars that we can play with. So we can give tax cuts to our working class, because they like it. The working class likes tax cuts. Even if they don't see much of it, they like it, so we can rope them in. As we take from the educational sector, as we take from the health sector, as we take from the social services sector all of that, we can boost the economy a whole heap by giving it to those who are going to spend it: the working class and especially the very wealthy. When they get the money and invest it, oh, good God knows how many jobs will be rolling in like manna from heaven, rolling in like water from the mountains."

You guys are good. At least you know how to protect your buddies.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, I'm going to get into—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: All right, Mike. I'm going to get back on topic. Mike Harris says he's given us a whole lot of money for research and I'm wasting it.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: What happened, Bert?

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'd like you to address your comments through the Chair, and it's usual to refer to other members by their ridings.

Mr Marchese: I do. I always say Mike Harris Premier, sir. I do say that.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): They sent you in here with no material.

Mr Marchese: Oh, come on, Mikey. Mike Harris, the Premier, you've got to give me some credit here for having some research capability. Please.

OK, Bill 128: you'll recall a couple of years ago I said there is not one jurisdiction in the world that I know of at the municipal level that is funding housing by itself. Do you remember me saying that? I've asked you guys, with all the research money you've got—because we don't have a lot. You're right, we've got some, but not a lot. Help me out. Tell me what other jurisdiction in the world—forget about North America—

Hon Mr Harris: Venezuela.

Mr Marchese: Come on, Mike. You're pulling the tail out of a hat. OK, I'm checking out Venezuela. I don't think so, though. No, no. I think the Premier is joking with me here a little bit. But we've got it on the record. Venezuela is funding housing at the municipal level. OK.

Premier, I was going to talk to you about the bill. All right, I'll have to do that without him.

What did I say? Very few jurisdictions in the world at the municipal level are running housing by themselves. Is that correct, Minister?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I know that, but is that correct? I don't know any, but I have to admit that I heard there might be one or two jurisdictions in the world—there might be. I think there was. I can't lie, but I don't know where they are.

Interjections.

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Mr Marchese: It certainly isn't one in the industrialized world; otherwise I would have known it.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Cairo? I'm told Cairo. OK, God bless. There is one jurisdiction, Cairo, but I can bet my boots it's not Venezuela. All right, Mike Harris, the Premier, it is not Venezuela.

Once we've got Cairo out of the way, what do we have? I say to the Minister of Housing, who are you relying on? What kind of experiences are you relying on as a way of showing that other jurisdictions have done it—effectively, presumably, because you never know. So you're modelling it on, presumably, Cairo. Is that the case, Mr Tony Clement, the Minister of Housing? Is that what you're doing? Oh, now minister of something, because it's not housing. The other day I was asking him a question about housing and I said to him, "You might as well abdicate your responsibility for housing because you're not doing anything. Why do you still have the title of housing in that title of yours if you're not building?"

There are few jurisdictions in the world doing it and you are downloading—not downloading, because it's a nice word. It's a euphemism. You're dumping your housing responsibility to those poor city councillors out there, who are saying, "We're desperate. We're poor. We're broke." Mel Lastman is saying, "We're broke," and he's saying, "Nobody can do it in Canada." If Mel can't do it, he's telling you, nobody else can.

But maybe Ashley Haugh, one of the policy assistants, can help me. Ashley, are you there? She left. Ashley, are you watching this program? Ashley Haugh, are you watching? Maybe you know and maybe you can help me, because I know you're one of the best policy assistants Tony Clement has. Maybe you know, but I need you to help me because I don't know. Ashley, if you know and I don't know, something is wrong. There is a problem here. We are not connecting very well. If you've told Tony Clement, the minister of something or other, about dumping of housing and that that is a good thing, you've got to tell me, because if I know, maybe I can help. Ashley, yes, come back into the Legislature here. I know you were here. Come back in. Ashley, I don't see those doors opening. You better come back in here because I need your help. Send me a note. Do anything to let me know that you have the answers so that I know how to proceed.

I've got to tell you, Mr Taxpayer and Madam Taxpayer, we're on a roll here. Nobody helps us and nobody helps you. You're on your own, desperately on your own, trying to figure out what the heck is going on in this place. They're going to dump this \$1.2-billion responsibility down to the city and the city's saying, "Oh, my

God, \$1.2 billion for the next 20 years for repairs, for maintenance, for capital, and we don't have the money. Who's going to fix those buildings? Who's going to do it? There's no money. We need one point two billion bucks for capital repairs and for general maintenance, and we don't have a cent. We're left to our own devices."

Ash, you've got to help me out. It's \$1.2 billion in capital repairs for the next 20 years, and all Mike Harris, the Premier, has given is a couple of million; I think \$50 million. You know, Ashley, that's not going to do it. It's not enough. Poor Mel Lastman, I don't know what he's going to do. He's going to dump on you from now until kingdom come. He's going to dump on Mike Harris—oh, there she is. Ash, send me a little note. Give me the answers. I desperately need answers, because you know Mel Lastman. He's going to go crazy while he's in Switzerland. If he doesn't find some answers from now till he comes back, he's going to go after your Premier big time. He's going to say to Mike Harris, "You take it over because I can't. I don't have the money."

Mel is going to say to Mike—Mel and Mike—"Mike, we haven't been spending more than what we had in 1992. Our expenditures have been frozen since 1992." He's going to say, "Mike, we need your help. Inflation has been going up and we have no money from you. You have been dumping so many responsibilities, but we have no money. We're stale. We've been frozen since 1992. You keep on dumping these things on us. What are we going to do, Mike? I've got to attack you. You know that."

He's going to say, "Mike Harris, I've got to attack you. You know that I'm a good Tory, but I've got to defend my city. I can't do this alone. If I go down, you come down with me. If the city of Toronto goes down, Mike Harris, you're coming with me." That is what Mel pretty well told him before he left for Switzerland. That's what I would say if I was in charge. Mel Lastman is saying, who wants this responsibility of housing? Who wants it?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Now, John, that's not true. Johnny, you were not in committee; you know that. Ashley would know because she was in the committee. There were a whole lot of people who came and not one of them that I know—correct me if I'm wrong, send me a note—not one of them said, "We love the download. We love, Mike Harris, that you're dumping this responsibility on us. Mike, we love the fact that we have no money, but you're giving this to us because we like it, because we're the only ones who could do it."

Ashley, am I right? She's saying I'm right.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Etobicoke North, come to order.

Mr Marchese: One of the questions we were asking in committee was, "Where are the supporters of this bill? Where are they?" Deputant after deputant came there saying, "We've got a whole heap of problems."

Speaker, I've got a couple of more minutes left still and I want to read something for the record. I've got to get my glasses. It's getting harder here as I get older. I recommend these glasses to you, John. They're sexy.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: There are some words that are acceptable in this place.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, here it is. Councillor Brad Duguid, city of Toronto, submission to the standing committee on justice and social policy. Here's what they have to say on behalf of the city of Toronto, not speaking for himself, but on behalf of all those right-wing councillors, Liberal councillors and New Democrats, the whole shebang, the whole group. Here's what they said—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: John, will you listen, please?

He said, "Many financial risks are associated with the transfer of social housing to the city," are either "unknown or hard to predict ... factors" which could mean rising costs to the city including the following—I'm going to list them for their benefit, Speaker, through you.

"Interest rates: we are starting from a point of historically low rates.... We face the risk of rising mortgage interest rates at renewal and resulting subsidy increases." Stop me when you think it's too fast. "Will the province be there to help us out when that happens or will those costs fall on the backs of the Toronto property taxpayers?" Good question, right, Speaker? This is my friend here, Brad Duguid, saying this.

There are many questions here. There's a whole paper here. I can't read the whole thing because I don't have enough time.

"The loss of the federal subsidy and expiry of the agreements: the prescribed multi-year phase-out of federal subsidy, especially related to the prescribed service level standards, will no doubt put pressure on us to make up the difference.... Will the province be there to assist us when this happens or will those costs" fall on the backs of Toronto property taxpayers? You notice how the questions always go back to the burden of the property taxpayer? You noticed that, right? I'm not asking this question. It's the city of Toronto.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: It's not funny, John. I mean, it's serious stuff, right? Come on.

"Capital repairs."

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: John, please, we're talking about something else. "Capital repairs: potential costs for capital repair costs not covered by existing reserve funds or by capital budget levels in the subsidy envelope we inherit."

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Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Look at these questions, John:

"Will the province be there to help us out when these capital repairs come back to haunt us or will those costs

fall on the backs of," guess who, "Toronto property taxpayers?"

Mr Mazzilli: There were no capital repairs when you were in government. Everything was falling apart.

Mr Marchese: Come on, Frank, please. Frank is not—I'm going to refer to him by his title—Frank Mazzilli, from London-Fanshawe. Listen to me, Frank, when we were in government—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Marchese:—we were in a recession. Even most conservative observers will say that indeed we were in deep recession, and some of those conservative-minded folks would say that even in that recession New Democrats put in a whole lot of millions of dollars to maintain our stock.

The Acting Speaker: Order. There's too much talking back and forth. If you find it necessary to say something and if you need to laugh—and I'll not warn the member for Etobicoke North again.

The Chair recognizes the member for Trinity-Spadina

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker, for your many kindnesses.

The city of Toronto goes on—there's much. It says: "Default: the risk of mortgage default, and more importantly any unusual costs to prevent default." Here's the question, John, from Etobicoke North: "Will the province be there to help us out when mortgages default or will those costs fall on to the backs of," guess who, "Toronto property taxpayers?"

You get the sense of the problem here, right, John? know, you failed to realize the problems the city is going to have to absorb as a result of the dumping of the responsibility on to the municipality.

Here is somebody else from the region of York, and think this fellow from the region of York was rather supportive of the Mike Harris government. I've got this strange suspicion that there was some like-mindedness there. But in spite of that, this is what he had to say: "Issues include"—this is one of your buddies, I suspect although I could be unfair to him, I don't know, but I got that strange sensation. He says, "Economic risk associated with the potential for rising mortgage rates, and other market conditions such as rising fuel costs, economic downturn" could hurt the city if they have to be the recipients of this dumping.

He goes on to say, "Underfunded capital reserves and the adequacy of funding for capital repairs in the public housing system" is an issue that needs to be addressed by Mr Santa Claus—that would be the Premier—before he dumps this responsibility on to the municipalities. "The need for a provincial commitment to a meaningful due diligence process including reviews of the condition of housing stock, as well as the organizational and financial health of housing providers."

That was one of your questions, Cliff. Do you remember? You were talking about due diligence. Here's one of the people—there are a couple here—who was most concerned about the dumping of housing on to the municipalities.

polities. One of these delegates said when he came to the committee hearings, "We need a due diligence report."

What does that really mean, Mr or Madam Taxpayer? It means that people like Cliff Martin here were asking for a serious report that studies our capital needs, the extent of all the capital that we the province are the owners of, giving a fair assessment of the problems of the stock in terms of capital repairs, the costs, giving a fair assessment of what is 30, 40 and 50 years old and what needs to be in many ways fundamentally restored if not torn down, because some of them are not fit to stand.

People like Cliff Martin were saying we need to have that due diligence report. We need to know what we've got before you dump it on us, because unless we have that due diligence report, we don't know what the city is going to be stuck with. But it's not a city in the abstract; it's the property taxpayers who would be left holding the bag, the property tax load bag. People like him and others, people like Vance, want to know what the effects of that are going to be on them as tenants. Because when the city discovers it doesn't have the money to help them out, they're on their own. Mike Harris is not there any longer. The city hasn't had an increase in its own funding since 1992, and they know they're on their own.

That's why they don't want the dumping. That's why people like Vance and people like Cliff here are saying, "We're not asking for this download." The cities are not asking for this download. AMO, the organization of all municipalities across Ontario, which I will quote very shortly, is saying, "We don't want it." City councillors individually and collectively are saying, "We don't want it." Property taxpayers are saying, "Good God, we don't want it." Most of the providers are saying we should not be passing the responsibility of housing, which should properly be paid for by the provincial government, on to the taxpayers of Toronto or of any other municipality. Nobody wants it.

So I ask you, Ashley, who wants it? I don't know that. Maybe you do. You haven't helped me one bit to tell me who wants this badly, except Mike Harris. The Premier of this province wants to dump it on to the city because he knows a good deal when he sees one. He's a businessman. He knows a good deal. He's saying, "Look, we can dump this on to the city, we don't have to worry about it. We don't have to worry about the expenses. We don't have to worry about capital repairs. The city will be blamed." People will go to the city and say, "My God, what are we going to do? We have a capital stock in complete disrepair. There's no money. What are we going to do?" Mike says, "Go to Mel. That's his responsibility. It's nothing to do with us. Good God, we just passed a bill saying they're in charge."

Mel is a good businessman. Mike Harris is a good businessman. He's shoving it to Mel and Mel is saying, "No way, José. I sold fridges in my past life. I know when I'm getting a bad fridge over a good fridge, and I don't want this one." That's what Mel said about three or four days ago. He's saying, "No, Mike, you keep it. I don't want it. It's a bad deal for Toronto." Thank God

Mel was a good businessman in his past. I suspect that if he wasn't we'd be stuck with this problem. We'd be stuck with it where a mayor of a city would take it deferentially, subserviently, in deference to the Premier and say, "Thank you, Mike, for all the blessings you give us. Don't you worry, we'll take care of it, even if we don't have the money. Don't you worry." Not Mel.

Thank God he's a good businessman and thank God that Mel is there saying, "OK, Mike, if you want to play Mr Christmas and Mr Santa Claus, maybe you can do it with welfare recipients, but you can't do it with us. Maybe you can fool a whole lot of people out there, saying you've got a gift for everyone, but you can't fool me. This is no gift for me. I'm not taking it." The Lord is merciful in many ways. We are blessed with a Mel Lastman who is a good businessman and who is saying, "I'm not taking this."

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Speaker, do you know what? In committee—I forgot to bring them—I think there were over 250 amendments, or at least over 200 amendments, 200 and something. Speaker, you're not listening to me. He's not listening to me. John Baird, you're listening. The amendments were this thick. I call that incremental incompetence by the government, which never can quite figure out how to do it right.

They brought in a bill without properly consulting the stakeholders, and because they didn't do it, in spite of the secret stakeholder meetings they had where people had to sign documents—Ashley, you would know this, right?—saying "We didn't see anything, we didn't hear anything, we didn't smell anything," whatever involves the senses. They had to sign on the bottom line.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Didn't I say, "didn't hear"? Didn't hear, didn't see. What else, John?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Speak.

Mr Marchese: Didn't speak anything. See, John is my good buddy. He listens to me and supports me every time I'm here.

So these poor people had to sign on the dotted line, like a secret document of sorts, saying you were at this meeting but you really weren't at this meeting. The fear of God was put into all these participants, saying, "If you should say anything that comes out of these meetings, we will deny it." That's probably what they said. On the pain of who knows how many lashings, but that's another story. But people were so frightened and intimidated that of course they signed on the dotted line and of course most of them didn't say anything.

That's one problem. The other problem is they introduced Bill 128, and each and every one of the deputants that came said, "We have a problem with one aspect of the bill, if not the bill in its entirety." There wasn't one deputant that said, "We love this bill." So of course, at the end of it, John, 200 amendments. There's another John. You guys have been around here for a while. Have

you ever had over 200 amendments on a bill? Something is wrong. That's why I call it incremental incompetence, because it's an ever-growing problem.

Surely if you had consulted the stakeholders you would not have had to introduce so many of your government amendments. I'm serious. I think you guys passed over 100 amendments that you introduced yourselves and we New Democrats and Liberals had another 100, more or less. You didn't accept ours, of course, because you didn't like them.

Hon Mr Baird: How many of ours did you accept?

Mr Marchese: Yours? We've got no choice. You guys have the limousines. If you drive the big limousines there, we can't get in. We're not even asked to get in. We don't even know how that car glides. We don't know how that limousine drives because you guys don't let us in. Almost each and every one of our amendments were defeated, except some, to be fair. Some of them were accepted, so that you could appear magnanimous, so that you could be generous and—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Marie, over 200 amendments.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: All right. Well, OK. But what about the amendments?

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): You're right.

Mr Marchese: I was talking about the amendments.

What did AMO say, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario? "AMO, since the original decision was made to transfer social housing, has consistently expressed concerns about" this. AMO has expressed concerns about this since the very beginning. Here's what they say. "Income redistribution programs funded through the property tax base" is a problem, as is "the financial capacity of municipalities to increase the supply of affordable housing." By the way, everybody talked about this. Everybody talked about the inability of cities to create housing. "Protecting municipalities from significant future financial risks related to housing programs; maintaining the condition of existing social housing; ensuring a smooth social housing devolution from the provincial to the municipal order of governments; and providing maximum flexibility for the administration and accountability related to the transferred social housing." It goes on and on. There is so much by way of concern here, one has a hard time knowing where to begin.

They dumped on this bill from the very beginning when they came to those hearings to the very end. We couldn't find one that supported this government. We couldn't find one. Member for Etobicoke North, what they really, really were angry about was the fact that we have such a desperate shortage of housing and no one seems to care, not the Conservative government provincially—to be fair to the federal Liberals, they did, in the federal election, make an announcement of money, I know. They did make that announcement. Some of us said, "Better late than never."

They could have talked about this before the election with the provincial governments. They could have had some agreement with them, saying, "What do we need to do?" Because they admit that there is a problem; they do admit at the federal level that there is a problem. Let me read to you what they said: "Canada's urban regions are experiencing a severe shortage of affordable rental housing. New construction of rental housing is at a near standstill." See, they got it right. "These shortfalls, combined with massive population increases, have brought vacancy rates to an all-time low and pushed costs beyond the reach of many Canadians." The federal Liberals understand and acknowledge that we've got a housing crisis—not just a shortage, but a crisis.

Although they only made the announcement of \$170 million in the last week or week and a half of the federal election, it was better than nothing. It barely addresses the profundity of the need, but at least they made an announcement. It's a bit phony, I have to admit, because they knew M. Harris doesn't support it, doesn't want to build, so it was like making a promise that nobody would pick up. Nobody in Ontario, at least, would say with open arms, "I'm in. That's what we've been looking for." So M. Chrétien could happily say, "No, we are in. What can we do if Mike Harris doesn't want to jump in with us? But we made the promise." I know it sounds a bit phony but I urge M. Chrétien to go on his own if he has to. If Mr Harris, the Premier, doesn't want to play Santa Claus with housing, then you, M. Chrétien, should do it on your own.

Because while I know each and every one of these Tories here—each and every one of them—does not support housing for the most vulnerable, for the working man and woman of this province who don't make enough money to have a home, opposes the construction of decent housing, you, M. Chrétien, you who have a heart should do it on your own. We need you, M. Chrétien because we have nobody here. I urge you, M. Chrétien, if you are watching—you or the types like Ashley who sit there listening in to the discussions of the proceedings of Parliament in the Legislature, that you would pass it on. Pass it on to Jean. Say, "Jean, we need you. We need housing. We desperately need housing for the homeless." We desperately need housing for those who have so little not enough to afford a one-bedroom apartment, which in the city of Toronto costs anywhere from seven hundred to nine hundred bucks—if you can find it. That's at the low end. A two-bedroom would be anywhere from \$900 to \$1,300 or \$1,400. Decent, if you can find it.

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We're talking about people who work modestly for modest incomes, who don't have enough to buy the houses that we're building in the wonderful 905 area where so many Tories get elected provincially and so many Liberals get elected federally. They can't afford those homes. They're looking for a modest apartment but the private sector—you remember the private sector that the former Minister of Housing, M. Leach—do you remember him when he used to say, "We're going to

build housing. We're going to have 60,000 units"—10,000. Sorry, M. Leach, I don't want to misspeak you. Do you remember you used to say, "We're going to build 10,000 units a year. Once we bring in this decontrolling of rents"—the elimination of rent control, effectively—"the private sector's going to come in and start building and houses will flow like water from the mountain?" Well, M. Leach, you were wrong. Not only were you wrong, but you knew you were wrong and you sold the taxpayers a pipe dream. You were good, M. Leach, when you used to tell people, "Building co-operatives and non-profit is a boondoggle. We're going to end it all. We're not going to build any more, so nobody will have housing and all of you 905ers can be so very happy that we're not spending any more. So what if people are poor and they can't afford a decent home? Let them worry for themselves."

Darwin was right. Survival of the fittest is what we're all about. The 905 understands it, and if people in other parts of the province don't have the money, let them worry about it, because Mr Harris says it's not our job to worry about those who are not so lucky as he is to have that wonderful pension he gave himself when he got rid of the—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Yes, he did, Frank. He got rid of that wonderful pension some of us had. He did well with it. He got close to \$1 million as a result of the deal. He did OK. Some people are not so lucky, eh, Ted? People like you and me, we're not so lucky. Mike did OK.

So some people in this Darwinian society do well. Let them eat cake. Let them do whatever they want. Mike Harris is the non-government government and people are on their own. You work hard, and if you work hard you can get to the 905. If you don't work hard enough, that's too bad, because we're not building any housing for you. "It's not our job," Mike Harris says, "to worry for you. If you work hard at two jobs, maybe you can do it." And did you notice that Mike Harris, the Premier, is about to change the laws that permit you, Mr Taxpayer, to work longer than ever before so maybe you can afford a house in the 905, the right-to-work legislation where he's going to extend the workweek so people who can't afford a home in the 905 maybe now will be able to do it? If they work 12 hours a day, Monday through Saturday, maybe they'll be able to afford a house in the 905. How about that, Mr Taxpayer? Wouldn't that be grand? They might get tired along the way working 12 hours a day and they might fall asleep as they work and they might get injured, but the right to work is such a precious thing really. If people want to work, they can, and if they get injured, that's life in the fast lane and it's OK with the merchants of mercantilism, those in the back scenes working for Mike Harris. It's OK for them; they probably are well paid.

It's sad. It is so sad to see that the US is investing in housing and we're not. We're talking the US here. They're investing in housing. Did you notice? They actually are investing in housing and in transit in the US,

no less. In that land of Erewhon, "nowhere" in reverse, where nothing really happens, things are happening now. They're spending on housing and transit, on the infrastructure, so they can build their cities, so that cities that are the vibrant centre of provinces, in this case, or the states in that case, get the money and the support they need from the state level and from the federal level in the US.

We're not doing it here. We used to do it in the 1960s. We used to spend money on transit. We used to spend money on housing in the 1960s and 1970s and we stopped doing that. The Americans, learning from us 20 years later, are spending, and the Canadians, with the Harris regime, decide to go the other way around. We're behind the Americans. Can you believe that? Can you believe it? We're behind the Americans. These people know that the cities are the centre of community, public and economic life, and they're investing. If you people go down there and pick up some ideas on welfare, which hasn't worked there but you bring it here anyway—why can't you guys travel a little bit? Take a little walk down south, pick up some of the good ideas and bring them back.

Mr Mazzilli: We're trying to save money.

Mr Marchese: You're trying to save money? No, I'm telling you, you're doing the wrong thing, Frank Mazzilli, from London-Fanshawe.

I don't know what to say. I really don't know how to reach these Tories. That's why, Mr Taxpayer, Madam Taxpayer, I always appeal to you, because in the chamber we don't communicate very well, as you've gathered. I am communicating, as always, directly to you, never through these people, never.

We lost a civil society when these people got in, in 1995. Civil society has disappeared. These people are so authoritarian, I have never seen anything like it. These people are so incompetent, I have never seen anything like it. Yet some of you taxpayers still vote for them. How do you do it? Send me a little note to tell me why you still like them. Tell me, because I don't know.

Civil society is gone. Democratic society has disappeared. We don't consult you taxpayers any more. We don't bring bills out to the public any more. We either have one day of hearings or maybe two days if you are lucky, by the generosity of this government, and that's it. We have one day of hearings here in the city of Toronto in this chamber downstairs—one day—where most of you don't have a clue what is going on. Most of the members don't have a clue what's going on; imagine you. If they're in the dark, imagine how much in the dark you are.

You are completely left in the dark, and that's what erodes civil society, because in order to know, you need to be helped by the government that says to you, "We've got a bill out here. It's downloading of housing. We want to know what you feel." Do you know that? Of course you wouldn't. How could you? They don't tell you. They don't bring out the bills any more for debate. They don't debate any more.

Mike Harris and M. Stockwell the other day said—he and Janet Ecker, the Minister of Education—“Oh yes, we have debated this bill,” the one that extends the hours to 60 hours a week.” She says, “We’ve been debating it for three years,” Speaker. You were here, I think. Three years, and I say to myself, hmm, three years. Where have we done this? Perhaps I was absent for a while. Was the minister consulting with somebody for three years? If so, who was it?

Mr Caplan: Frank Sheehan.

Mr Marchese: Frank Sheehan is in the in; he knows. Who else knows? How could you have a three-year debate on something and we on the opposition side know so little about those meetings? We don’t know who came to those meetings, we don’t know who got invited, we don’t hear anything, there are no public minutes. There is no public display of the, “Hey, hey, let me tell you what we discussed today,” nothing.

So you’ve got the Minister of Education saying, “We have been debating this bill for three years; it’s time to go.” Go where? They’re about to extend the workweek to 60 hours, work-till-you-drop legislation, and they think it’s good. They don’t have the guts to take it out and say to the public, “We’ve got something for you. We want to hear from you.”

This is work-till-you-drop legislation, and you don’t know about it? Mr Taxpayer, Madam Taxpayer, where are you? What are you doing? You’ve got to get up from that chair that you’re sitting in and consult with Mr Stockwell as it relates to the extension of the workday. Consult with the so-called Minister of Housing—who doesn’t have housing any more. I don’t know why the poor guy still calls himself the Minister of Housing when he’s not building anything.

You’ve got to call these people and hold them to account. You’ve got to ask them some questions, “What the hell are you doing? You’re about to download, dump housing down to the municipality, which means the taxpayers, and I don’t know about it? I want to know what I’m in here for. I want to know how much I’ve got to pay for this.”

2010

There’s another piece of legislation that says, “We will cap taxes for the business sector and we will cap taxes for rental buildings, but we will not cap taxes for the property owner.” Did you know that, Mr Taxpayer, watching? Mel Lastman says, “We’ve got to increase property taxes because we haven’t increased rates since 1992, and you, provincial government, have not helped us since 1992. We’ve got to increase our taxes in order to give you the services you desperately want.” And, by the way, do you know who’s going to pay for that? It’s you, Mr and Madam Homeowner, because it can only be passed to you, the homeowner. The business sector is scot-free. Rental building owners are scot-free. It’s only you, property owner. You are going to be stuck with half of education; social services, which includes welfare and child care; ambulances; housing; transit. These are social services that should not be on the property tax base.

With the passing of this bill tonight, we are about to pick up all of housing, from now until eternity, until we have a new government that’s going to have the courage to take it right back and do what Mrs Mulvale from AM says, that we will have to upload, not download, services. We’ve got to upload the services to where they belong. Until we have a government that has the courage to upload social services to the provincial income tax base, we will not be safe in our cities. Our cities are bankrupt and they don’t have the money any longer to provide the services that you continue to complain about. Some of you complain about the garbage on our streets. Some of you complain about—

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): On point of order, Mr Speaker: Could I ask if there is quorum in the House?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): There is a quorum present?

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: He’s right; there was no quorum here at the time.

What are we looking for here? We’re looking for taxpayers to become a little more engaged and a little more politicized. If you don’t know what is going on in the place, malevolent governments will do what they can to squeeze you a little bit, while at the same time paradoxically saying they are giving you money. They squeeze you and then they say, “We’re giving you money.” It’s a paradox, it is a contradiction, but this government revels in it. Only you can unravel it. Only you can unmask this smelly onion that is in this government. I appeal to you to object to Bill 128 and to fight against it with all the strength you’ve got.

Mr Mazzilli: It’s entertaining watching the member from Trinity-Spadina. If only there were credibility on some of these issues. The credibility was from the time he was in government.

Let’s go to what Bill 128 is all about. It’s something that has been negotiated over many years. It’s part of Who Does What. In Who Does What, the province took on education because, as homeowners in my riding knew at the time and continue to know, there were 10% increases on that portion of their property taxes year after year, double digit, at a time when incomes had been going down and there were fewer jobs. This was certainly not sustainable.

When the member for Trinity-Spadina said that Premier Harris said he is the friend of taxpayers, he’s right. The Premier needed to take control of a system that was being overtaxed at the local level.

Why was it done? Out of good management. Housing and other things can be managed at the local level far more effectively than they can be managed out of Toronto. Why was it done? In our country, many services are provided by three levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal. What is the dilemma in that

When someone needs to make a decision, they need to get two different governments involved to make that decision. It never occurs, and unfortunately things are left unattended.

The member for Trinity-Spadina talked about social housing and that somehow capital improvements were done while he was in government. I can tell you that capital improvements were not done to any social housing in this province while he was in government. In fact, what I saw at most places was units that had deteriorated and fences that were falling down. Today those have all been fixed and brought up to standard.

What is the other dilemma? Most social housing under the NDP government didn't even meet the standard provincial codes. So here's this legislation that has to be abided by and it doesn't even meet provincial codes.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. This can't go on. Member for Kingston and the Islands, come to order. This is a solo, not a chorus.

The member for London-Fanshawe.

Mr Mazzilli: I'll stand by what I say: while you were in government, units had deteriorated to the point where they did not meet any of the provincial standards as far as housing goes, and they were left to continue to deteriorate.

Of course, what we hear continually is, "Well, there was a recession." One night I was debating the member for Niagara Centre. It had to do with justice issues, and he was complaining that there were not enough justices of the peace in Ontario. I had to remind the member for Niagara Centre that while they were in government, we had the Askov decision. Do you remember that, Mr Speaker? That's where serious trials were not heard in time and serious offenders who had committed rapes, murders and so on were set free. That was at a time right after the Liberal government. The court system had been allowed to deteriorate to the point that trials could not be heard on time. Of course, what was the comeback? "We were in a recession."

The way you were spending money, that was not only a recession, it was a depression. The taxpayers in my riding talk about a surplus. Well, that surplus would become a deficit in five minutes if that side of the House were allowed to govern. That is why Premier Harris has to listen every day to this spending from the Liberals. They want to spend on just about everything. I don't know the last time Dalton McGuinty got up to ask a question to protect taxpayers.

I have to collect my thoughts for a moment—I'll find it very quickly here. I want to talk about what governing is all about. Governing is about making this province more prosperous for everyone. If we go back to how that's been done, it's been done by cutting taxes. If we cut taxes, certainly more jobs have been created. We've heard that almost 800,000 net new jobs have been created in this province since 1995. I might add that Premier Harris was here tonight listening to the member for Trinity-Spadina. When it comes to protecting taxpayers,

he is willing to sit in this House late at night fighting for taxpayers and ensuring the opposition doesn't spend taxpayers' money unwisely. He sits here as late as he needs to at night to fight for taxpayers. I thought it was important to advise viewers at home that our Premier is dedicated and willing to do that.

What do these 800,000 jobs do? Of course, they create housing. That's what this bill is all about. Some people purchase their own homes and some people choose to rent. It's a choice. But the NDP and the Liberals continually talk about how social housing can only be provided by governments. Well, the private sector does build, and let me tell you something: the private sector was not building while they were in government. Do you know why? The banks had repossessed everything. The only private sector owners of rental housing while you were in government were the banks, by repossessing everything.

2020

Mr Caplan: What are you talking about?

Mr Mazzilli: The housing critic from across the floor talked about CMHC, and he should talk about CMHC, because that has a lot to do with building new rental housing in our province. Presently the rule is that you need CMHC protection if you're going to finance your buildings beyond 75% of the mortgaged value, and they add 2% on to the value of that mortgage. So is it profitable for the private sector? It's very difficult when you have CMHC fees at what they are. I urge that member to speak to his mother and perhaps, through the federal government, make changes to CMHC financing rules to allow the private sector to become more involved and make it easier for them to get financing while they're building new housing.

CMHC is not only for rental housing but for people buying normal houses. When someone purchases a home and chooses to finance it at a certain level, they need CMHC protection. Again, I ask the member—I don't know what riding he is from—to pass on to his mother that we expect the federal government to make some changes and bring down financing through the CMHC rules for all people, whether they're homeowners or apartment owners.

We continually hear in this debate that somehow there has been some downloading here. Let's go back to Who Does What. When the province of Ontario took on education taxes, there was a certain agreement made with municipalities, and in fact there has been an uploading of funds to municipalities. Let me tell you how. There was a shared responsibility when it came to social services in this province, and by cutting taxes, creating more jobs, over 500,000 people in this province are now working again and not collecting social assistance. That benefits municipalities. We continue to strive to reduce that role.

Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals continually fight any changes to social services. When we came out with work for welfare, Dalton McGuinty got up and opposed that. When we came up with getting people training in order to get them back into the workforce, to be contributing members of our communities, Dalton McGuinty

opposed that. We certainly understand that the NDP would oppose that, but I would suspect that at some point Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals would have to decide what they stand for.

Through the election, I can remember them going around with their 20/20 Plan—20 NDP ideas, 20 Conservative ideas. They threw them together and somehow this was supposed to work in running our province. It won't and it never will.

In order to have a successful and vibrant province, you need leadership, and that leadership is Premier Mike Harris, because he had the courage to make the difficult but necessary decisions to cut taxes. And when we talk about cutting taxes, that should be across the board for everyone. Not only are we reducing taxes for homeowners in this province by 20% on the provincial portion, but also for tenants. That's to be passed on to tenants through the landlords, and we're mandating that that be done. Certainly tenants in our community have received those rebate cheques, some of the viewers who are watching, those rebate cheques that you received from landlords. That was because Premier Harris mandated that that money be returned to you by the landlord.

With opposition like this, no wonder the private sector is somehow hesitant to build housing in this province. The first thing they would want to do is tax tenants through the landlord. There's only one landlord, right? But there are many tenants. Put the tax burden on that one landlord and he'll have to spread it out to the tenants. That's what the Liberals don't tell you. Mike Harris and our government will never allow you to download on tenants like you did in the past.

The issue of crime in our province is something that really needs to be addressed. I hear continued complaints in our community about the Young Offenders Act. It's an act that came out many years ago, and the intent was that if a young person did something wrong, perhaps that young person should be given a second chance. We on this side agree with that. We agree that a young person should be given a second chance, perhaps a third chance; and most people with children who are watching, or grandparents, would agree with that. The problem is when you've stolen your 10th car and you've been involved in your fifth police pursuit. At what point is enough enough? The federal Liberals had better start listening. This is not just some people saying that a young person made a mistake and ought to be forgiven, ought to be given a second chance. We on this side very much believe that a young person who's made a mistake, either through peer pressure or a conscious decision, ought to be given a second chance, perhaps a third chance. But at some point, when one commits a violent crime, when one is involved in a suspect apprehension pursuit for the fourth or fifth time, we had better start addressing that. Why should we address these situations? Because the public and the police and the young person to put their lives in jeopardy. I certainly urge all members of this Legislature to continue to press the federal government to make meaningful changes to the Young

Offenders Act so that, once and for all, violent young people are dealt with.

The other day the Attorney General brought forward a bill that would seize the assets of criminals. It's about time someone in this country did that. As we see in Quebec, there have been rival biker gang wars. Some of those biker gangs live in social housing. That's something we have to stop. I've seen them going in and out of social housing projects, and with no standards; we had better stop that. That's why the Attorney General came up with this bill. When you have a biker who brings in illegal monies through their organizations, that are not claimed, and then they apply for social housing and the taxpayers in my riding have to pay the cost of the social housing, that is wrong and ought to be stopped.

When I hear Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals getting up and saying, "Bikers should be allowed to keep their profit. Bikers should be allowed to live in social housing without any consequences," we on this side of the House very much oppose that.

I have so much to say and, like the member for Trinity-Spadina, so little time to say it, but I know I need to leave some time for the member from Durham. So I will cut out right here and thank you for your indulgence.

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Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I'm very pleased to join this debate. I always thought that in this House one had to stick to the truth. I certainly don't want to accuse any other members of not speaking the truth, but I will now give you my version of the truth, the way I see it.

First of all, I think the public has to understand that all social and public housing initially were federal and provincial initiatives. There was a need in this country some 30 or 40 years or even longer ago where politicians at the federal and provincial levels knew there was a role for them to play to ensure that people were properly housed. That surely has got to be one of the essential criteria of living in a province as rich as Ontario.

So over the years we've had the creation of about 250,000 social housing units, which include about 84,000 in the public sector, and they're usually referred to as the housing authority housing. MTHA, for example, here in the city of Toronto, operates something like 30,000 units, and the other 50,000 units or so are spread throughout Ontario for family and senior housing. Then there's the other sector of about 160 housing units that have been created as a result of both federal and provincial programs, where the governments decided that in order to get people into adequate housing, which was primarily built by the private sector, subsidy funding was required. That's how those units got to be created.

The reason for me mentioning that is that there has always been a recognition that this is a provincial and a federal responsibility. I've been saying here for years that it's an absolute shame that both the province, in 1995 when it decided to get completely out of the public and social housing area, and the federal government as well—but at least now they're making sounds and

they're announcing programs for getting back into the stream. But during the last five years there has been absolutely no geared-to-income housing built in this country, and as a result the waiting lists of people who require this kind of housing have grown throughout the province and throughout the country.

I think we should also understand, contrary to what the other member said, that the downloading that has now taken place of these provincial and federal responsibilities is going to cost the taxpayers of each and every one of our municipalities a minimum of \$1.2 billion. With this bill in effect, the responsibility for social housing in the province both in the public sector and the not-for-profit sector is going to download to the property taxpayers in this province a total of \$1.2 billion worth of responsibilities.

The other thing that the member mentioned is this notion about what condition most of this housing is in. I can tell you that most of the housing authority housing, the publicly owned housing, unfortunately, through a succession of governments—and I'm not just talking about the current government; I'll take it back to the NDP government and the Liberal government before it, and the Davis government before that. They have never adequately spent money in capital expenditures to make sure that the housing, most of which was created back in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, has been properly maintained and that the capital dollars to make sure that these houses were upgraded and that they maintained their quality, the kind of money of a capital nature that was required to do that was just never put in. So we're now left with the position whereby, according to the region of Peel, which did a study on this particular matter, \$1 billion is required just to bring the public housing stock of this province, some 84,000 units, up to date. They claim \$1 billion. In Peel county alone they estimate that it's going to cost \$57 million.

The province is somehow trying to deal with this by saying, "You know, some of the money that we got from the federal government for this, some of the \$58 million, we are passing through to the municipalities, about half of it, and that should be enough for them to upgrade and to do some of the major repairs that are necessary in the public housing stock." It is not enough.

The other thing that has to be understood is that most local municipalities, quite frankly, don't want to be involved in this business. There are some municipalities that, through the operation and setting up of municipal non-profit housing corporations, have shown an interest and a willingness to get involved in the social housing scene. But there are many municipalities that simply don't think it's their responsibility to get involved in the housing scene, other than perhaps through emergency housing during the winter, or youth shelters or things along those lines. The members opposite may disagree with this—we can all disagree with this—but that is the feeling most municipalities have.

The reason for that is that most of the agreements that have been entered into, let's say between the non-profit

groups and the other two levels of government, have been completely outside of the municipal governments' mandate. They haven't been involved. So what is happening is that all these contracts that have been signed by the other levels of government and the non-profit groups are going to be downloaded on local municipalities that had absolutely no say in formulating those agreements to start off with.

What's going to happen as time goes along is one of two things. In order to maintain the quality of the housing that I think we all want for our people—whether it's in the public sector or the social non-profit sector, we want to make sure that it's maintained—and the only way to maintain it is to take money from the property taxpayers to pay for the needed repairs. Either that is going to happen or the rents are going to have to be increased to such a level that there is enough money to effect some of these capital repairs.

Each and every one of the submissions that was made to the committee that met for two days to listen to deputations made that point: AMO, the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association. These are the groups that represent the organizations that are actually dealing with those housing situations right now, the boards and organizations that represent the housing providers. They are all making the same point, that what has been downloaded by the provincial government to the local municipalities in this bill are assets that are depreciating as time goes along, and there isn't going to be any money available to make sure these houses are maintained unless there's a great injection of cash from the local taxpayers. Everybody who is involved with these organizations agrees with that.

Even the government's own Who Does What committee, which was set up and organized and chaired by David Crombie at the Premier's request, said that you cannot download social housing to the local level. It's not that these people are ill-intentioned or mean-spirited or anything like that; they simply will not have the capacity at a local level to look after the much-needed capital repairs that are required.

The other thing that every representation that was made to the committee clearly pointed out is that the act says that putting into effect a lot of the various aspects of the social housing download is going to be done by regulation. These organizations want to make sure they are going to be involved in the decision-making process as to what regulations are actually going to be passed that are going to affect them directly. Even though we totally disagree with this download, I hope the ministry will at least acknowledge the fact that these organizations that speak on behalf of the social housing providers of Ontario will be directly involved in ironing out the regulations that will be passed down to them. That is absolutely essential, because if that doesn't happen, we're going to have an even worse crisis than we have right now.

We all know that the waiting list for this kind of housing—social, non-profit, co-op and public—has been increasing over the last number of years. The last I will say on this before I turn it over to one of my colleagues is to simply once again implore this government that, OK, we don't like what you've done by this bill, we don't like the fact that you're downloading to local municipalities the social responsibility, which is going to be costly in the days to come, but at least acknowledge the fact that you have a responsibility, perhaps not in the direct building of new social housing but at least in subsidizing that housing to such an extent that people who need housing can be given affordable, rent-geared-to-income housing.

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Get reinvolved in that field. It is simply not enough to say, "Well, the economy is good. We're putting so many more people on the employment rolls etc and therefore this problem will take care of itself." We know that with the boom we've had in most of Ontario over the last three to four years, there has been no new modest-income rental accommodation built in this province, and that simply isn't going to change. It's an income problem. The people at the lower end of the economic scale aren't making enough money so that they can afford what's usually described as about 30% of their salary or wages for housing. The newer housing that's being created within the private sector simply will demand too much rent in order to pay for the cost of building that housing to allow people of modest income to get into that housing without any government support.

I urge the province and the federal government that when we leave all the political rhetoric aside, it's their responsibility to get back into the housing field. I am absolutely convinced that if there are two or three areas that governments have to be involved in, it is to provide good health care, to make sure that everyone is clothed and to make sure everyone has enough to eat. The other main component of that is to make sure that everyone has shelter. Right now, there are many people doing without and the only way we're going to turn that around is for governments at both the federal and provincial levels to once again accept their responsibility and get involved in the social housing scene.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to speak and participate on Bill 128, the Social Housing Reform Act. I'm just going to hold this up because it's the bill we're talking about, Bill 128. I'll try to stay on topic. I only have half an hour so I may not get through it. It's 57 pages of detail, but I'm going to labour through it. I'd turn on my VCR, if I were you.

Actually, I'm going to go through a couple of very technical things. First of all, I want to make it clear that some of the municipalities aren't happy with this, but they've asked for say for pay for some time. The difficulty with being government—the opposition, as we've just heard, can say pretty well what they want. At the end

of the day, the fingers are going to be pointed at this government. But we should all recognize where this started. The devolution—I like that term actually. It's an interesting term, "devolution." It's a devilish kind of term. But it's devolving from the federal government down. That's number one, Jim, in your normal coding of the system here.

I want to speak specifically about the protections and indeed the benefits this legislation offers to people living in social housing and those who want to live in it. The benefits of administering social housing at the local level: the government's philosophy is that the province should not be in the business of subsidizing bricks and mortar. We all know that this is clearly one of the monikers we addressed when we were elected in 1995. I want to state very clearly today why the government wants to transfer social housing to the local government and what we are doing to protect tenants, at the same time as we are protecting the taxpayers of Ontario.

I want to reiterate one of the key benefits of having municipalities fund and administer programs: they will be able to integrate social housing and other services provided at the local level. That means that if Bill 128 is passed, local governments would be able to integrate their administration for housing with that of Ontario Works and child care, a very important challenge for them. Someone who needs subsidized housing and day-care and who is receiving assistance through Ontario Works and is looking for social housing can be served in one place with one system. How unique.

Of course there are many stakeholders in this who might be disappointed that their own particular interest is not satisfied. You've heard government members say that we believe social housing is best delivered at the local level. Not only taxpayers but also tenants are better served when the government that is funding social housing has the best understanding of local needs and conditions, and that is indeed the local or upper-tier governments; in my case, the region of Durham. There is no question that municipal leaders from Rainy River or Lanark county know their own communities better than anyone here in Toronto at Queen's Park.

Provincial standards: a number of government members have said, and I will say to you, that protecting tenants is this government's number one priority and this piece of legislation underscores that. The province has taken every precaution to make sure that tenants are protected through the entire transfer and beyond. I repeat: tenants will not be disrupted. No tenant needs to feel threatened by program streamlining or devolution, as I've said before, or social programs at the municipal level. This is what it says here.

How will tenants be protected, you might ask? I will say first that this government has confidence in municipalities to make responsible decisions. However, we will also ensure certain protections as provincial standards. A provincial standard would ensure that municipalities will continue to protect or provide assistance to the same number of rent-geared-to-income households as receive

assistance at the time of devolution. There is not going to be any change, no loss, in the number of units. That is to protect the current tenants and people waiting for social housing.

A provincial standard will ensure that there are province-wide rules for benefit levels. The province intends to ensure that rent geared to income would continue to be set at at least 30% of income. To ensure that the rules would be clear and applied consistently across the province, we propose for the first time that basic rules governing rent-geared-to-income assistance would be set out very clearly in legislation, as opposed to regulations. A provincial standard for eligibility would mean that Ontarians can apply for social housing in any part of the province, regardless of where they live at any time. For example, if a senior living in Kingston wants to apply for social housing in Ottawa to be closer to their family members, it will be possible, if Bill 128 is passed, to apply for assistance without living in the municipality.

A provincial standard would ensure that there would be no decline in the number of units available for people with physical disabilities. This is worth repeating: there is no decline in the units set aside for people with disabilities.

Minimizing disruption to tenants: one step this government has taken that will minimize disruption to tenants during the transfer is our process for developing public housing. We propose to transfer public housing as a business, complete with the current employees. This would give the local housing corporation the necessary expertise to operate the housing units and minimize disruption to public housing tenants throughout the transfer.

Tenants consulted: this government has consulted extensively with stakeholders about this regulation. This includes a province-wide tenants consultation in the spring of 1998 by the social housing committee. This government has also worked to keep tenants informed of our plans for devolution by communicating with them through social housing providers.

Victims of violence: this is one that's received some attention recently. For some time, the province has had a policy for all social housing providers that gives victims of family violence priority to be placed in social housing. While we will give municipalities some flexibility in their criteria for selecting applicants, there will continue to be a mandatory priority for applicants who are victims of violence. Again, that's worth repeating, but I won't.

Coordinated access: the proposed legislation sets out mandatory provincial requirements for coordinated access to social housing. I think this is absolutely important. When I look at the number of services and service agencies and the number of lists, sometimes it's beguiling how many lists there are and what the waiting lists are. To have a coordinated list is absolutely—the time has come. The government believes there should be a transparent and seamless approach to applying for and being placed on the social housing list.

Under the system proposed, service managers would coordinate access to social housing in their communities

to ensure that individuals seeking assistance can get the information they need and can place their names on the waiting list at any access site in their community. How unique.

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The proposed system would place applicants on a centralized waiting list according to their choice of provider, projects, location and needs. Service managers might choose to integrate coordinated access service with Ontario Works and child care programs, or to delegate this role to housing providers or other community organizations. I think it's important to add that this legislation would also ensure that applicants with special needs would have priority access to special-needs units, as I said before.

Supply of housing: this is the issue as it comes down; there's no question about it. I can tell you, on the record, that adequate shelter is probably the most important program we could implement. That's absolutely critical. Having permanent, adequate shelter is an absolute goal that we should all strive toward. This government is aware that waiting lists for social housing are growing. They have been growing for many years, even the lost 10 years, as we often say here. We often forget about the lost 10 years. It's strange how you could forget about the lost 10 years by forgetting about it. Even while social housing has been developed under previous governments—very expensively, I might add as well.

Let's look at what this government is doing to encourage the development of affordable housing, because we do not believe that affordable housing must or should be built by the government. That's the starting point that we may disagree on, but nonetheless, we are the government.

We have taken a number of steps to encourage new supply and improve the climate for investing in rental housing. We replaced rent controls with the Tenant Protection Act, which encourages investment in rental housing—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: I wish. We amended the Ontario building code to encourage the development of single-room occupancies, a very unique idea. These are smaller units that can be built more affordably. Single-room occupancies are now being built in a number of North American cities, just not too many in Toronto.

We also created the PST rebate program, which provides a grant of \$2,000 per affordable unit to offset the impact of provincial sales tax—a good idea, actually. To date, more than 2,000 affordable housing units have received conditional approval for this program. There's been a lot of take-up on this program. That's the PST rebate program.

The government is actively working to find ways to increase new supply. We're trying to get other provinces and levels of government, particularly the federal government, the little rascals, onside to deal with the decline of private sector construction of affordable housing and to look at productive ways to encourage the industry to get back into building. One thing they could have a look at is

the GST rebate on affordable housing, but not apartments. This is the area that they could improve through the GST rebate.

We believe that stimulating the private sector to build more affordable housing is the best solution to meet the needs of low-income Ontarians. I couldn't agree more.

I would like to close—actually, I'm not going to close; I've got 13 minutes left, so I have no intention of closing. The government made protecting tenants a priority in developing this legislation. We firmly believe that an effective and efficient social housing system delivered by local governments that are closest to the people is the most effective way to respond to the needs of tenants and is the best system for all Ontarians.

I'm now going to get into the off-script message, arguably the most important message. I just know that there were some in my area, such as Mayor Diane Hamre, the former mayor of Clarington, now the past mayor—that's actually the same thing. Part VIII of the bill establishes the Social Housing Services Corp—there's some problem with this issue, as I hear it—and sets out its powers and duties. The power of the corporation includes the coordination of insurance programs for housing providers, the management of pooled capital reserves and funds of housing providers, and the establishment of schemes for the joint purchase of goods and services by housing providers. They have a problem with part VIII, that section. They say the regions, in my case Durham, or others in the case of members here from regions arguably not as important as Durham, but nonetheless important—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: And the single city of Hamilton. What they're saying is that they already have the joint purchasing power and they don't want the province intruding. If you took all the regions of the province, it would certainly provide better leverage for a more efficient purchase of services like insurance or pooled access to capital reserves, a strategic alliance I fully agree with.

Part V of the bill governs the provisions of rent-geared-to-income assistance and special-needs housing. In fact, part V is worth a second read. In the very limited time I have left, I'll try to get to that section. There are only 11 minutes left, in case there are other members who'd like to address this bill.

The eligibility of housing for rent-geared-to-income is important. Assistance for special needs is determined in accordance with the provisions of local rules established under part V. Part V also provides the establishment of the provincial and local occupancy standards for priority rules. I think this is the main thing that people want. We want fair access for people with needs, whether they're physical or income needs, so they are being treated fairly. I certainly want that and I'm sure the people of Ontario want it.

When you really look at Bill 120, you have to realize that the local level—in Durham, Mayor Dianne Hamre sat on Durham non-profit housing for many years and really tried to do a good job. What happened is that it was

government-driven, it was government money, so it was—to use the term of my friend from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale—a boondoggle. A billion-dollar boondoggle is the way I heard it.

Another important part is the transfer of assets. There are three parts to this housing transfer issue, and I've got to remind members that the federal government started this devolution. They transferred it down to the province and the province is kind of devolving it down to the local municipality. This was all part of the Who Does What exercise. Now, we all know there was an exercise. There was the Fair Tax Commission in the previous government; I think it was the NDP that had that commission. All of them looked at who's best able or equipped to provide these services. Our exercise was called Who Does What, under David Crombie, and we took off some of the load of the educational levy and we have given them more room to deal with the delivery of services, rationalizing services. Certainly social housing, as I said before, is one of the more important parts of that devolution.

Part VII provides for the payment of provincial housing costs and for service managers' housing costs. The costs are allocated within the service area in the manner described in the act. Special provision is made for the allocation of costs within the greater Toronto area. In the greater Toronto area, which would indeed include the region of Durham, there is some upset with the pooling of costs. I go on the record as saying I agree with those concerns that we have to pay for things we're not getting. No one likes that. But if you're pooling all these costs in the GTA, this has to be recognized as some of that.

The Greater Toronto Services Board report is due, I believe, in March 2001. That report is probably going to deal with what the responsibilities of the Greater Toronto Services Board, the GTA, should be. I can tell you, there is no more important topic in my riding than the whole issue of the GTA. It means the greater Toronto area, and it's a very important area. When we look at social housing as one component of providing community and community supports, there's no question in my mind that there are arguably more services provided in Toronto, with more of the social infrastructure. Perhaps people from Durham do migrate to Toronto and, as such, we should be the benevolent partner, as a member of the family, and pay our fair share. I think the elected members will have difficulty there. We arguably get more of a benefit from the GO Transit system. If a lot of my constituents are going to be part of the GTA, they arguably use the GO Transit system more than the people living in Toronto, who use the Metro transit system. So when it comes to social housing and the pooling argument in part VII, as I've outlined, I want to put on the record that some of the members and citizens of my riding have some problems with the pooling of supports for social housing.

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There are a couple of suspicions here. I have some notes on this. Bill 128 is a very complicated 57-page

document. There are about eight or nine sections to it, with a lot of tables. There are protections, but I have to put on the record in the very fragile few moments left what social housing in this province will look like if the legislation is passed—and the operative word is “if.” First and foremost, as you’ve heard before, social housing tenants will be secure in their tenure. So all the people who are, I might say, vulnerable should feel secure. Don’t allow the press to agitate and frustrate you. The agitators are always out there. They’re actually always here; with the exception of the NDP, there’s no one here. There would be minimal, if any, disruption of their lives. Rent geared to income will not be affected. It would continue to be set at 30% of income. I think it’s very important to put that on the record. There would be no decline in the number of households receiving assistance. The stock, the inventory, will not—I repeat, will not—decline.

Despite what you may read or hear, there will be no decline in the number of units available to people with physical disabilities. If you look at having one consolidated list within a region, one intake route that says, “There are 500 people looking for a place to call their home,” I think we’d be providing a great advantage by having one waiting list and then allocate for people dealing with family violence, people with disabilities and people with rent-geared-to-income needs.

I think it’s long overdue, and arguably a lot of the front-line people who may disagree with this government on many things realize that probably the most important part of this whole thing is local management of the social housing program. Finding new partnerships is another way of allowing affordable housing to take place in Ontario. Municipalities would manage and operate their own social housing portfolios. How unique. They’ve been paying for most of it for the last couple of years. They just don’t have the governance, and we’re passing that final baton over to them, so to speak. Some may not call it a baton, but I do.

The role of non-profit and co-op housing providers will remain essentially the same. Volunteer boards, which have been so important in the operating of these housing providers, will stay in place, so I don’t know what the worry is here, actually.

The province would set out and monitor standards to ensure a degree of consistency in service across the province. I think that’s important, to make sure the homes are well-maintained and secure and basically affordable. The key in this market is to find ways to keep housing affordable without having a bunch of people lined up who really don’t need affordable housing. We have to find ways of sorting out the people in need. That’s why the linkage with Ontario Works is absolutely critical, to find that people who are on support systems are in fact the ones we’re supporting.

How will this improved system be achieved? Let me highlight some of the details in the bill now before the members. With the proposed transfer of public housing at the start of the new year, municipalities would immedi-

ately have the say for pay they have been seeking through AMO and the rest of the organizations. The service managers, the municipalities that pay the bills, will have the say for pay, and will have direct control of both the property management business and the properties themselves.

I know that most members here realize that supportive housing and social housing—and this transfer has been talked about for some time. It was part of the local service realignment that this government undertook and it was part of the federal government’s plan to get out of the business of providing housing. At the same time, I’m very much aware that providing affordable housing is the absolute infrastructure of all the issues with respect to social need that I hear about and read about in the paper.

Municipalities have the right now to invest their money, to ask their taxpayers to pay for an additional or greater supply of social housing and let the local people provide that. I think in many cases you’ll find that local taxpayers will actually give them feedback on that.

The non-profit transfer would be completed within 18 months of proclamation of this bill. This legislation proposes to simplify the administration of non-profit housing by replacing a number of different operating agreements for provincially led programs with one stable, consistent, accountable framework.

Bill 128 is probably the first step in providing clear, accountable, local governance of social housing in Ontario, something that when everyone—the developers and everyone else—felt that the government was paying for it, there was always a higher cost administratively and for capital itself. Now that local governments and local boards have control of this, I believe we’re on the right track to make sure that people who really have the need will in fact be the people who receive the service. Whether they are people with special needs or they are people who are victims of family violence, or simply people with a social and economic need, this government is providing local governments with the power and the autonomy to make local decisions about providing social housing to their constituents and ours.

I am very pleased and I certainly will be supporting Bill 128.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I wish initially to indicate my opposition to this bill, having looked at various aspects of it. It’s attractive when you first look at it, the way the government packages it. I guess you have to look fundamentally at whether social housing should be at the provincial level or the local level.

Having been a municipal politician many years ago on St Catharines city council and having observed the municipal scene for a number of years, I’ve come to the conclusion that social housing does not belong at the local level. This is not to say that the effort to realign, as government members would say, the responsibilities of the provincial government and the local government isn’t something that has to be done from time to time.

I thought the appointment of David Crombie, a former mayor of Toronto, a former federal cabinet minister and a person who's got a lot of credibility with people from different political backgrounds—his advice by and large was good advice on the so-called Who Does What exercise. What we found, however, was that many of the responsibilities downloaded to municipalities tend to be those which in the future will be onerous in the financial sense, and such is social housing.

We have to look at what revenues are available to the various levels of government to see whether they can best handle a specific jurisdiction. It is difficult to have a municipality, for instance, accept social costs on the property tax base. I think, as everyone in this House knows, and most people in Ontario, the property tax is considered to be a regressive tax. It's regressive because it does not take into account an individual's ability to pay.

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Let me give an example of that to demonstrate why indeed it's not a preferable tax. If a person happens to fall on difficult times, be unemployed and have a significant drop in income, that person's income tax is going to diminish. That person is likely going to make fewer purchases and therefore is going to pay less in terms of consumption taxes. Those are the sales taxes and excise taxes.

However, the property tax does not change because of the personal economic circumstances of that individual. That's why we say that services which are related to property best belong at the local level and services which are social in nature, broader in nature, should be assumed by senior levels of government. In this specific case we're talking about the provincial government downloading or offloading responsibility for social housing on to municipalities.

What that does is, it militates or causes the government to bring about a situation where everyone believes it is wise to have larger municipal units. I'm not one of those individuals. I happen to believe in the integrity of individual communities, that yes, there is even at the municipal level a need for overall responsibility assumed, for instance, by county government or regional government, but that there is still a role and a responsibility for a local level of government to maintain the identity and the commonality of that community, among the people who reside in that community, at the very least. I believe it is on balance not a wise decision to force municipalities to assume social housing.

There's another overall problem with this bill and it happens with many pieces of legislation. Again, it may be something which is peculiarly interesting to people in this House as opposed to people at large. What this bill seems to be is an enabling bill. In other words, it's legislation that enables a lot of things to happen. The details are to be found in the regulations.

For those who may be watching this evening, I can say that this House debates legislation. Our committees deal with legislation. Regulations, on the other hand, are the

prerogative of the government. They're ordinarily dealt with behind closed doors by the cabinet and perhaps a few others, but certainly there's not the input from the opposition or from the public in the regulatory framework that there is in the legislative framework. This bill, I'm afraid, provides for the government, behind closed doors, in secret, to make significant changes in the field of social housing.

We should recognize as well that, as is the case with a lot of legislation—not all, but a lot of legislation—we should have had far more extensive hearings on this particular bill. People interested, for instance, in co-op housing, which has grown in this province and has been quite successful in many areas, and in non-profit housing, have an interest in the details that might be contained in this legislation or the regulations that flow from this legislation. It doesn't hurt to hear from those people.

We are stuck with a timetable dictated by the government. The government usually brings the House back somewhat late, it forces the House to sit day and evening and it crams its legislation into a parliamentary calendar, which means that it must be completed before the Christmas break.

What a lot of the public doesn't understand is that this House won't sit again till April. In other words, in January, February, March and certainly part of April we will find the situation where this House is not in session. It would be preferable to have the House sit more days and have our committees sit more days and, when the House is not sitting, for our committees to travel to various parts of the province to have input from people who have an expertise in a specific area. I think it would have been preferable were the government to proceed with hearings of a meaningful nature, as opposed to simply continuing on with this bill without that kind of valuable input.

The member for Durham made reference to a point which I think we should remember. No doubt he has seen the studies which show, for instance, that the health of a person is often affected rather significantly by the person's economic circumstances or personal circumstances. That is, a person living in poverty or adverse housing conditions often has more difficulty with personal health than those who are in a more favoured position. Something that's very basic is housing. I've read a number of studies which have indicated that housing can make a significant difference. The member for Durham made reference to that, and I think it is only too true that the housing conditions in which people live have a major impact on the family and the extended family. If we can provide a circumstance in the province where people have affordable, decent housing—we're not all going to have a mansion, we understand that, but affordable, decent housing in a neighbourhood which is livable—we'll see a major difference in how that person turns out.

I want to indicate as well that I'm very interested in hearing from my colleague from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, because we have different circumstances. We've heard from the member from Kingston, another Toronto

member, Mr Caplan, and myself from St Catharines, and I think there are some unique circumstances that face people in Toronto, where there's even more social housing and rent-geared-to-income housing, more non-profit and co-operative housing and other areas. I'm going to relinquish the remainder of the time to the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale so I can have his contribution to this debate. I think it will be significant.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Thank you for allowing me to make it to this point. I know that earlier I was trying your patience as I heckled members opposite, but I couldn't resist it because they just don't get it.

Before I launch into my full attack on this stupid piece of legislation, I want to introduce to members present Cliff Martin, who sits in the members' gallery, who is a distinguished tenant advocate and activist who lives in St James Town. He knows better, and I hope all members later on will take an opportunity to speak with him.

The legislation ought to be called *The Bill to Make Our Public Housing Worse*. I stand in opposition to this bill because it's a stupid bill. It is a bill that has been attacked upside and down at committee and here through the debate by people who know more about it and its impact than the government opposite. It is motivated by so much of the same thing that motivates almost everything from the government across the way: the desire at the end of the day to clean up their balance sheet at the expense of the municipal balance sheets across the breadth of this province.

Earlier, people laughed; they dismissed the report that was referred to by the member for Kingston and the Islands, done by the region of Peel, no hotbed of liberalism, that estimated, looking at 20% of the public housing units there, that the costs to be borne by municipalities for this download to bring these units up to standard is \$1 billion. Look inside this bill, municipal taxpayers, and see what protection is there for you on your property tax budget. You will see inadequate protection. So if you're watching at home and you're a municipal taxpayer—and particularly one somewhere like the city of Toronto, where there is a large number of units—a tax bill is coming your way courtesy of this provincial government download.

We hear about the state of public housing as if it's good, and we know that members opposite who echo those remarks have never canvassed in a public housing building. I've had the opportunity through two recent elections to spend some time in some of the public housing stock in the riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale, and there's lots of it. In the Regent Park community, I have 57 buildings and hundreds of townhouse units, home to thousands of people. There are empty units and units that are in decay because the province of Ontario's Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority has done an inadequate job and has been inadequately funded to bring those units up to a state of good repair. In many cases,

these units are in a state of disrepair that would be frightening to people, and yet they are expected to be adequate housing for people.

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I also represent the Moss Park community, three large buildings—275 and 295 Shuter, and 151 Sherbourne—and four buildings in St James Town, one of which is Cliff's home, among a couple of others.

I want to contrast what's going on in our public housing communities with social housing communities, which are defined by people in the sector as non-profit and co-op housing. The people opposite like to talk about co-op housing as if it is just this extraordinary cost to be borne on the backs of these taxpayers, this really expensive form of housing. But while it is true that this kind of housing costs money—good quality housing costs money, a concept lost on the government—it provides good quality housing. We ought to celebrate the kind of neighbourhoods and communities that have been made possible by good visionary housing policies. Instead of having a bill before us that is designed to make our public housing more like our social housing, so our public housing communities more like our co-op housing communities, we have a bill that will do the opposite: take the best of co-ops and undermine it so that over time we will see decline.

You may criticize me for attacking communities in my riding; members will turn that around, and I don't really care. But the sad reality of things is that in the city of Toronto and in my riding, the worst neighbourhoods from the standpoint of crime and safety, for residents in their units and for residents outside their units, regrettably, are public housing units where the province of Ontario has been the landlord. You may say that is the reason they ought to be downloaded, but I say that is the reason they ought to be invested in in an appropriate measure. We have not done an adequate job of developing community in public housing. Instead of having a bill before us which seeks to do just that, which seeks to engage the people who live in those buildings in their communities, to make them better, to make them more involved, we see a bill that will take co-ops, where the community is actively involved in managing and running them, and we see a gradual devolution of their role within those, a diminished role on the part of co-ops to be able to manage themselves.

I want to give you a contrast, and I think it's a stark one. In my riding there's a building called 200 Wellesley. It may be the building where Cliff lives; I can't remember. It's got about 800 units in it. It's a massive building; it's a village. Probably 50 different languages are spoken in that building. There's a very regrettable story about it, and that is that in the last 10 years, nine people have been murdered in that building: nine people in a public housing community, in a building owned by Mike Harris and the province of Ontario.

Just across the street, there's a building called 85 Bleeker Street. It's a co-op. It used to be an MTHA building, but it's a co-op. In that building in a day or two

there's a dog pageant. As part of a sense of community, people are going to have a pageant. They're going to dress up their pets and they're going to come and celebrate the holiday season together.

This is the kind of contrast we're dealing with in my riding. Across the street from one another you have two different forms of housing: one where the government offers a little more to pay the price for meaningful community involvement, and one where we pay the price in the form of loss of life and in the form of poor health. That is the contrast that is at play here. Instead of having a bill which is designed to make the bad one better, we have a bill that will have the net effect of making the good one worse.

Then, if that is not enough, the government of the day will force that cost upon the already burdened property taxpayer in my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale and in the city of Toronto. This government last week announced its \$1.4-billion surplus and the city of Toronto has announced its \$160-million shortfall. The province of Ontario talks about the extraordinary increase in its revenue; the city of Toronto has had a flatline in its revenue.

The member for London-Fanshawe went on to tell us that municipal taxpayers ought to be pleased because the province has taken all of those welfare people off their rolls. But imagine the circumstance were it to occur that an economic downturn resulted in more people needing that assistance. What will be the impact on the municipal taxpayer? So I send a message to homeowners in places like Etobicoke North, where the member is present, in the city of Toronto, that you are about to pay the cost of one more piece of Mike Harris's further download.

I want to say, at the risk of making some municipal leaders angry, that with my colleague David Caplan, the member from Don Valley East, who has done a great job in highlighting the extent to which this is a stupid piece of legislation, I sat through two days of hearings where government members also sat but I don't think they listened. If they listened, they certainly didn't hear the message or they didn't get the message, because that's not really the business they are into. If they did, they would have heard story after story of people wanting to protect their communities.

But I must say, I thought the most compelling presentation came from Brad Duguid, a young member of Toronto city council who represents a ward in Scarborough, who this week, along with Mel Lastman, my long-time ally, painted for the city of Toronto an ugly picture and began a vigorous defence for the taxpayers against this kind of download. But other municipal leaders, so loath to criticize the government, pulled punches. They were more critical in the areas outside of the committee room. I realized why after I had a chance to speak with some of them, because the fix is in. The trade-off for this download is just a little bit more of what they want to

have in the new Municipal Act bill that is in negotiation with the province of Ontario. I say to all of those out there who would hesitate to criticize this, they ought to keep in mind that at the end of the day they have a responsibility to do a better job of protecting their taxpayers from this kind of download.

There's one last thing I want talk about, because I'm hoping the members opposite begin to understand the extent to which we can, through energy and innovation and investment, create good community, that government can do that. They ought to come for a visit in the St Lawrence neighbourhood. The St Lawrence neighbourhood was created by people on Toronto city council in the 1970s and 1980s who had a vision for a place that would be high-density and mixed-income and healthy. Unlike many of the attempts that we made with respect to public investment in housing, it is a dream come true. It is not a perfect neighbourhood by any stretch, but it is a neighbourhood where people of all incomes live together and grow together and take care of one another. That's the kind of community we can create, but it is not the kind of community we can create when we pass the responsibility to a government that does not have adequate resources to do it. It is a short-sighted viewpoint, from the standpoint of this government, to abandon its responsibilities for that.

There was a guy, Michael Du Maresq, who came to the committee from a co-op called the Brewin Housing Co-op over on Charles St. I had the opportunity, when I worked for Mayor Hall, to attend the opening. He made an excellent presentation and a heartfelt offer to members of the government to come and visit his co-op community. He sent them a letter as a follow-up, and I don't think any of them went. They ought to have, because if they did, if they truly cared and if they truly wanted to learn about what was good community created by public investment, they would have seen the potential by visiting the Brewin co-op. Instead, they choose to support this stupid bill because they're told to. I will stand with pleasure and vote against this bill, because it's a terrible bill.

The Deputy Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate.

Mr Coburn has moved third reading of Bill 128, the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I have received a letter from the chief government whip deferring this vote until tomorrow during deferred votes.

It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 12 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 12 décembre 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): Last week, on the anniversary of the Montreal massacre, women's minister Helen Johns told the women of this province that the Harris government is committed to ensuring a woman's right to safety. It's disturbing to hear them talk the talk over there when Mike Harris refuses to take action.

There has been a travesty of justice in my community, and this government refuses to address it. Women from across the province are incensed that a Chatham chiropractor abused his position of trust in a string of sexual assaults. He was convicted of nine counts of sexual assault but was only given a slap on the wrist. He walked away with an 18-month at-home sentence. The Chatham-Kent Sexual Assault Crisis Centre has logged more than 500 calls from angry citizens in the last two weeks, men and women who are outraged. They are demanding that this government take action. They have sent hundreds of signatures and letters to the Attorney General insisting that he appeal this travesty of a sentence.

This government claims to stand for law and order and the protection of victims, but since coming to power Mike Harris has diminished the remedies available to women. This issue transcends all party lines. The Theresa Vince inquest spoke of the need to recognize sexual harassment as a "dangerous circumstance" under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. I have a bill being prepared that will do that.

I stand here today challenging the Harris government to live up to its promises to protect the women of this province by appealing that offensive sentence.

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): The following was written by a Canadian peacekeeper overseas, and he has asked that we share it with as many people as possible.

'Twas the night before Christmas,
he lived all alone,
In a one-bedroom house made of
plaster and stone.

I had come down the chimney
with presents to give,
And to see just who
in this home did live.

I looked all about,
a strange sight I did see,
No tinsel, no presents,
not even a tree.

No stocking by mantel,
just boots filled with sand,
On the wall hung pictures
of far distant lands.

With medals and badges,
awards of all kinds,
A sober thought
came through my mind.

For this house was different,
it was dark and dreary.
I found the home of a soldier,
once I could see clearly.

The soldier lay sleeping,
silent, alone,
Curled up on the floor
in this one-bedroom home.

The face was so gentle,
his room in such disorder,
Not how I pictured
a Canadian soldier.

Was this the hero
of whom I'd just read?
Curled up on a poncho,
the floor for a bed?

I realized the families
that I saw this night,
Owed their lives to these soldiers
who were willing to fight.

Soon round the world,
the children would play,
And grownups would celebrate
a bright Christmas Day.

They all enjoyed freedom
each month of the year,
Because of the soldiers,
like the one lying here.

I couldn't help wonder
how many lay alone,
On a cold Christmas Eve
in a land far from home.

The very thought
brought a tear to my eye,
I dropped to my knees
and started to cry.

The soldier awakened
and I heard a rough voice,
"Santa don't cry,
this life is my choice;

I fight for freedom,
I don't ask for more,
My life is my God,
my country, my corps."

The soldier rolled over
and drifted to sleep,
I couldn't control it,
I continued to weep.

I kept watch for hours,
so silent and still
And we both shivered
from the cold night's chill.

I didn't want to leave,
on that cold, dark night,
This guardian of honour
so willing to fight.

Then the soldier rolled over,
with a voice soft and pure,
Whispered, "Carry on Santa,
it's Christmas Day, all is secure."

One look at my watch,
and I knew he was right.
"Merry Christmas my friend,
and to all a good night."

PAROLE SYSTEM

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I would like to use this time to address the arrogance of this government when it comes to provincial service delivery.

Yesterday, the Premier received a letter from the president of the Probation Officers Association of Ontario. This letter stated that since April, the president of the association has been attempting to rectify problems

being caused by the intervention of Operation Springboard through alternative demonstration projects. The president stated that for the good of parole officers across the province, this matter had to be addressed. The president of the association went to extraordinary lengths to bring attention to this issue, to the Premier himself.

These actions included raising the issue with the regional director, the assistant deputy minister etc. These actions also included writing the minister several times, as well as informing the office of the minister that the program violates the Young Offenders Act and the Correctional Services Act.

How does this government respond to these concerns raised by those people? The EA to the Minister of Correctional Services tells her not to contact the minister by phone or e-mail regarding this issue. The Premier dismisses the issue as fictional and a myth. If this government was serious about working with instead of against the parole officers of this province, it would sit down with the association and discuss ways to correct the problem instead of simply ignoring it, hoping they'd go away or there'd be an investigation.

Premier, you owe it to Ontario's parole officers to make sure these problems are investigated fully and that such a breakdown in communication from your government never happens again.

RAIL SERVICE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Today we were to hear an announcement made by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines in regard to the fate of rail passenger service in northeastern Ontario, and I guess we were given one reprieve. Because of the weather, the minister was not able to make it to North Bay in order to make announcements on what is a very important issue for people in northeastern Ontario.

The message we want to bring from the north, especially to the Premier, is this: you are a Premier who is from northern Ontario. You live in North Bay, where a lot of jobs having to do with the Ontario Northland train reside, and people back home up north really wonder why a Premier who comes from North Bay, where the headquarters are of the ONTC, would allow such a decision to be made. I hope tomorrow we're going to hear some good news. I don't think that's the case.

We know that the government has been setting up the demise of rail passenger service in northern Ontario since they've come to government, first by cutting the subsidy and then by setting up the tables in order to make the announcement that we expect tomorrow. But I've got to say to the Premier that it's a disappointment. We would hope that somebody from northern Ontario who's elected and has the honour of sitting as the Premier of the province in this Legislature would come to work every now and then and say, "I am from northern Ontario and, yes, I will speak out on behalf of northerners." When you see a Premier doing things that hurt northern Ontario, you really have to wonder whom that Premier is representing:

the people living in North Bay or the people of Bay Street. I think we'll find out the answer tomorrow.

HIGH SCHOOL LAW STUDENTS

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): Last month during constituency week I had the opportunity to attend a law class at Clarke Road Secondary School. I attended Mrs Gerster's law class there. I must say that these students were interested in government and the legislative process. I was happy to attend the law class and discuss how a bill becomes law here in the Ontario Legislature.

1340

I want to thank Mrs Gerster for giving me the opportunity to participate in the class, and I was glad to have given them the chance to get first-hand experience on the parliamentary process. I was even more delighted to see their enthusiasm for learning. These students have proven to me that the youth of today are interested in government.

Here are some of the members of the class: Jacqueline Armer, Ryan Booth, Kale Brereton, Lindsay Cambridge, Ruth Davis, Natalia Girod, Lindy Grieve, Lindsay Griffiths, Erin Harkness, Rose Hooker, Amy Julien, Bob Mavrikkou, Kate Memmott, Jason Munn, Jason Phillips, Kinnaly Phommosack, Amanda Salmon, Melissa Sims, Otto Sosa, Brad Sparling, Chris Texeira, Peter Thrasvoulou and Todd Verstegen.

I was happy to recognize these students and their teacher. I'm encouraged by the example of these young students in our community today. They are interested in government and the parliamentary process.

PROPOSED BERNARDO FILM

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The news that Norstar Entertainment is considering the production of a movie profiling convicted serial killer Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka has been greeted with dismay and disgust by residents of St Catharines.

What purpose, other than exploitation for financial gain, could possibly be served by providing further publicity to Paul Bernardo, an individual who has inflicted so much pain and anguish on his innocent victims and their families?

Is it not enough that Donna and Doug French, members of their family and the many friends of Kristen have had to suffer through the endless real-life legal procedures that surrounded Bernardo's crimes, without being forced to endure the making of a film about the perpetrator of these crimes? Is it really necessary that we all relive the tragic and horrible events surrounding Bernardo's victims through the knowledge that a film is being produced to rekindle the morbid memories of days gone by?

For the people of St Catharines, and I suspect for all people of goodwill, I am confident that the answer is a resounding no.

This proposed movie, unlike some fictitious creations of a writer, would be based upon the tormented lives of real people and, whether the producer intends this to be the case or not, would serve to glorify the crimes of Paul Bernardo and, in doing so, to further the mental torture inflicted upon the families of Kristen French, Leslie Mahaffy and others who were viciously and callously attacked by a now convicted killer.

On behalf of the people of St Catharines and I know all members of the Ontario Legislature, I call upon Norstar Chairman Peter Simpson to abandon any plans to produce a movie based upon Paul Bernardo's crimes.

VANIER CUP FOOTBALL GAME

Mr Brian Coburn (Ottawa-Orléans): Mr. Speaker, as you're well aware, the 2000 CIAU Vanier Cup champions are indeed the University of Ottawa Gee-Gees.

The Garnet and Grey captured the national championship December 3 just down the road here in Toronto at the SkyDome—a 41-38 victory over the Regina Rams.

I'm pleased to tell you that seven members of the champion Gee-Gees are residents of my riding of Ottawa-Orléans: Adam Maheu, Jeff Lee-Yaw, Darryl Ray, Dan Peterson, brothers Mike and Luc Shaver and James Baker.

It was indeed quite a ride through the playoffs for the Gee-Gees and their star quarterback, Phil Cote, who went down with an injury in the quarterfinals. But backup quarterback James Baker came on and led the team to a strong victory over Laval.

Next up were the McMaster Marauders. No problem. James Baker led them to victory and was named MVP after a 20-15 win in Hamilton.

Having lost the Vanier Cup in 1997, the Gee-Gees were ready to prove all doubters wrong.

In the big final, Mike Shaver ran the ball eight times for 42 yards and caught three passes for an additional 44 yards, including a 26-yard run for a touchdown. His older brother, Luc, a senior who tasted defeat in 1997, led the Gee-Gees defence in their march to the Vanier Cup for the second time in four years. He was named the quarterfinal defensive player of the year.

Place-kicker Jeff Lee-Yaw was a perfect six for six on point after in the title game.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the entire University of Ottawa Gee-Gees team and its coaches on capturing the 2000 Vanier Cup.

I would also like to personally wish Dan, Darryl, Mike, Luc, James, Jeff and Adam the best of luck in all their future endeavours.

Congratulations to the national champions, the University of Ottawa Gee-Gees.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): As we approach the Christmas break, I want to make one more plea to this government to move forward

with the four-laning of Highway 11/17 between Thunder Bay and Nipigon.

This is a project that was considered an important improvement to the northwestern Ontario highway system 10 years ago, and there is no question the need is even greater today with the increase in traffic that has taken place over that time period. For several years, the province continued to provide annual funding so that the project could proceed. However, it has become increasingly frustrating for all of us who believe the four-laning must be completed that the province has recently provided no new funding for highway expansion projects in northwestern Ontario. While we agree that the rehabilitation of our highway system is important, that must not mean this vital improvement to Highway 11/17 should be left in perpetual limbo.

Certainly this is a priority for the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce. As the voice for business, they are particularly conscious of the need to improve our highway system in order to make our area more attractive for business and tourism. As a result, at their meeting this past September they passed a resolution calling on the province and the federal government to partner on a 10-year plan to twin these and other important sections of the Trans-Canada Highway.

This may very well be the process by which this project finally gets completed, but it will take leadership from the province in order for this to move forward. Today I am calling on the Premier and the Minister of Transportation to commit funding in the next provincial budget to this project. With that commitment we can then bargain strongly with the federal government to see that they help us build this enhanced and important highway project.

PERTH AND MIDDLESEX COUNTIES

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): Last week I attended the inaugural county council meetings in Perth and Middlesex counties. I rise today to welcome and congratulate the two new county wardens elected by their fellow councillors.

On Wednesday, Vince Judge was acclaimed as the new warden of Perth county. Warden Judge, who also serves as mayor of North Perth, has been involved with municipal politics for many years and served as warden nine years ago. Last Thursday, Al Edmunston was elected the new warden of Middlesex county. Warden Edmunston, who is the deputy mayor of Middlesex Centre, has been involved in municipal politics for about 10 years. I want to welcome Warden Judge and Warden Edmunston to their positions, and I encourage them to embrace the challenges that come with their new responsibilities.

I also want to take this opportunity to recognize Dave Shearer, the outgoing warden of Perth county, and Crispin Colvin, outgoing warden of Middlesex county. I commend Dave and Crispin for their dedication to their positions, their interest in local government and their

exemplary service. It was a pleasure working with Dave and Crispin on many issues of concern to the ratepayers of Perth-Middlesex. Both Dave and Crispin were welcomed by their colleagues to the Past Wardens Association.

Please join me in congratulating and welcoming the new wardens of Perth and Middlesex counties.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Medicine Act, 1991 /
Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les médecins.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND SOCIAL POLICY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice and social policy and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 117, An Act to better protect victims of domestic violence /
Projet de loi 117, Loi visant à mieux protéger les victimes de violence familiale.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Tuesday, December 5, 2000, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY ACT, 2000

Mr Wettlaufer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr34, An Act respecting the University of St. Jerome's College.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1350

LIMITATIONS ACT, 2000
LOI DE 2000 SUR LA PRESCRIPTION
DES ACTIONS

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to revise the Limitations Act / Projet de loi 163, Loi révisant la Loi sur la prescription des actions.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Attorney General for a short statement?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I will be making a minister's statement.

MOTIONS

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL
INFORMATION

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding police access to records of the assembly from December 4 of this year.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that the portion of the records of remarks made in the House on December 4, 2000, publication of which has been withheld by order of the House dated December 4, be released to those police authorities who request its release to them, in writing, for the purpose of being used in furtherance of their investigation into remarks made in the House on that day.

The Speaker: Mr Sterling moves that the portion of the records of remarks made in—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? Dispensed.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

LIMITATIONS PERIODS

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Our government made a commitment to the people of Ontario to create a more modern, accessible and efficient justice system. Today, with the introduction of the Limitations Act, 2000, we are taking one more step to fulfill that promise.

Limitations periods are time limits for starting legal proceedings in civil and family courts. Legal proceedings

not started within the prescribed time periods are forever barred.

For too many years the people of Ontario have been labouring under antiquated limitations laws. The province's limitations law is based on old English statutes which can be traced back 400 years, and there have been no major changes in the last 100 years.

In 1969 the Ontario Law Reform Commission noted that the language of the act was archaic and out of touch with modern conditions. Ultimately the ordinary citizen suffers because these laws are beyond comprehension. That was 31 years ago and not much has changed.

Currently there are dozens of limitations periods, scattered in various acts. This patchwork system of limitations periods causes confusion and may increase costs for individuals.

Our government wants to comprehensively reform and modernize this system to improve access to justice for the people and businesses of Ontario. We propose to do this through the Limitations Act, 2000.

The act would consolidate many limitations periods into one statute and create two fair and clear time limits which take into account the interests of both plaintiffs and defendants.

This is how the proposed legislation would work: there would be a general two-year time limit for most civil court proceedings. The limitation period would start from the date the person finds out, or should have found out, about the injury, loss or damage he or she suffered and who caused or contributed to it. This discoverability principle is consistent with a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada.

There would also be an ultimate limitation period of 15 years for most civil court proceedings. This means that Ontarians would have 15 years to identify injury, loss or damage and take legal action. Beyond this ultimate limitation period, a lawsuit may not be able to commence regardless of the plaintiff's state of knowledge. The 15-year ultimate limitation period is similar to the latest proposals made in other jurisdictions.

There are several very important exceptions set out in this act. These exceptions demonstrate our government's unwavering support for victims and vulnerable persons, as well as our commitment to minimize the financial burden on taxpayers.

First of all, the Limitations Act, 2000, would place no time restrictions on victims of sexual assault occurring in a relationship of trust to start a lawsuit.

Second, the act would provide special recognition and safeguards for minors and incapable persons.

Third, no limitation period would apply where the crown is involved in administering social, health or economic programs. This would help to ensure that those who benefit from government funding are responsible for repayment and do not unduly burden taxpayers.

Fourth, the proposed bill would not impose a limitation period on environmental claims that have not been discovered.

Introducing clear and fair time limits supports Ontario's position as an attractive place to do business. One

statute containing all limitation periods instead of many different periods in many acts would remove surprises and confusion about limitation periods. The proposed legislation would achieve a balance between preserving the right to sue with the need to know when potential liability will end.

It would modernize our justice system, support victims and support a strong economy. I urge all members of this House to support the bill.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): The government has said it has committed to the people of Ontario to create an accessible justice system. I'd like to take my time to talk about whether or not we've got that in the province of Ontario today.

I am greatly concerned that increasingly it is becoming the case that we're getting two tiers to our justice system: a justice system for the rich and a justice system for the poor.

The concern here, of course, is that we all want justice for all. I think all members in this House would want that. But how are we going to get justice for all if the poor cannot afford the expensive Bay Street lawyer or, for that matter, the expensive Sudbury lawyer? How are they going to have access to justice if they can't have access to our legal system and our legal profession?

I'm concerned that perhaps the Chief Justice of Canada's wary prophesy of last summer might come true. She said she doesn't want our justice system to become "a pretty ornament" put up on the shelf that we talk about and brag about when we talk about the just society of Canada. Yet at the same time, increasingly the poor are not getting access to our courts, perhaps access to new rights and responsibilities and benefits under the Limitations Act.

We know our legal aid system has been decimated. Last summer the president of the Canadian Bar Association said, "We've warned government that too many ... who need legal aid can't obtain it and don't have real access to justice." She said those warnings have been blatantly ignored. We heard from the Ontario legal aid plan about the cuts to legal aid and what that has meant. We are nearing a real crisis when it comes to legal aid and the provision of legal aid to refugees.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Stop the clock. The members waited patiently while the Attorney General made his statement. They owe the same courtesy to the critic from the official opposition. Sorry for the interruption.

Mr Bryant: We're concerned about the fact that early next year—I don't know if you know this—we have a crisis looming with respect to legal aid for refugees. They're not going to get any representation. I don't know if I misheard the minister, but maybe he says that it's up to the feds to provide the funding. The people of Ontario don't want the federal government and the provincial government to be fighting each other; they want them to be fighting for them in our justice system, and we don't have that right now in Ontario.

1400

Contingency fees: This might be a means by which the poor might get access to justice. We should look at that, and I thought we were looking at that in the province of Ontario. Then we found out that this minister was backing away. On September 25, 2000, the headline of the *Law Times* reads, "Flaherty Flip-flops on Contingency Fees." The rationale is troubling, because the concern, I would have thought, would have been about the balance between access to justice and having a fair compensation system. Instead, on November 17, 2000, the minister provided his justification. Do you know what he said? Do you know why we're not getting contingency fees? Here's what he said: "Lawyers don't lobby enough. I tell you the other professional groups lobby a lot more than lawyers do, and 'lobby' is not a bad word." I don't know if in fact we should proceed with contingency fees, but I don't think we should not proceed with contingency fees because lawyers are bad lobbyists.

Lastly, the minister in his statement said that in fact there is unwavering support for victims on that side of the House. I would say to him that maybe instead of standing here and debating the Limitations Act, we could be standing here debating Bill 24, Mr Hoy's act that would provide for safe school buses; Bill 73, Mrs Papatello's act to crack down on raves; the Bartolucci bill, Bill 6, to crack down on johns; Bill 146, the Bartolucci bill to crack down on adult entertainment parlours or Bill 67 on phony guns.

All those bills I'm mentioning right now, are these bills provided by the government to look after victims? No. They're provided by Ontario Liberals. I call on the government to bring these bills forward for debate right now.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): It is interesting that the Attorney General considers limitation periods to be the most pressing of justice issues at this time. I will acknowledge that there is a problem with respect to limitation periods, and I will acknowledge that this issue needs to be addressed.

I think the real issue here today is that the Attorney General brings forward pieces of proposed legislation like this in order to cover over and ignore the real access-to-justice issues that are out there.

Let me first of all refer to what is happening in legal aid. We know from talking to legal aid clinics, we know from talking to women's organizations and we know from talking to women's crisis shelters that there is a problem—no, not a problem, a recurring crisis in terms of women in this province being able to access legal aid so they can begin the legal process to escape relationships of abuse.

Over and over again, we know that women in this province are being forced to return to abusive situations because this Attorney General and this government refuse to make an investment in access to justice which will allow those women to access legal assistance so that they may begin to move out of an abusive situation.

What does the Attorney General have to say about that? Obviously, nothing. Access to justice for those

women doesn't count for him and doesn't count for this government.

Then we have the Dudley George family, who have been trying to access justice from this government for over five years now; the Dudley George family, who are asking for a commission of inquiry into how it is that an unarmed native man could be gunned down, and how it is that there is a chain of information connecting the Premier and the former Minister of Natural Resources to the death of Dudley George.

What does this Attorney General have to say about that access to justice? He says no: no inquest, no inquiry, no independent inquiry into what the events were that led to the death of this unarmed man. This is not access to justice; this is a travesty of justice.

The same Attorney General is party to a strategy that is going to attempt to bankrupt the George family as they try to get the information through a civil court. Is that access to justice? I don't think so. But if you're a friend of this government and if you have the money to pay for lobbying, this government is prepared to listen to you.

Then we have the Minister of Finance, who a little over a year ago shopped around personal information of thousands of Ontario citizens who happen to keep their bank accounts in the Province of Ontario Savings Office. This House found this government in contempt. Those people want access to justice. They want to know how it is that this government would shop around their personal information. Where is the Attorney General on that issue? Nowhere to be found. Those people had their personal information shopped around by this government in breach of the law, and this Attorney General pulls a disappearing act.

Then there is the issue of victims of crime. This is a government that among much paid-for propaganda, much ballyhoo, said they were putting forth a victims of crime act which would protect victims of crime. It went before a judge who had an opportunity to refer to and look at that particular act. Do you know what he said? He said the act put forward from this government in terms of the victims of crime was empty, superficial, superfluous. He said it did not do one substantive thing for victims of crime—in other words, no access to justice for victims of crime from this government.

The limitations bill is all about granting access to those who have the money. For those who don't have the money, this government is saying, "No access to justice for you."

DEFERRED VOTES

SOCIAL HOUSING REFORM ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA RÉFORME DU LOGEMENT SOCIAL

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 128, An Act respecting social housing / Projet de loi 128, Loi concernant le logement social.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1407 to 1412.

The Speaker: Mr Coburn has moved third reading of Bill 128, An Act respecting social housing.

All those in favour of the bill will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Hudak, Tim	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Jackson, Cameron	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, Bert	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Kells, Morley	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Eves, Ernie L.	Maves, Bart	Tumbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Levac, David	Smitherman, George
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	
Cordiano, Joseph	Martin, Tony	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 34.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow for the singing of O Canada at the daily meetings of this House.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As you know, the pages play an important role in the House, and today many of them travelled great distances in some very difficult weather to be here, in particular the page from Windsor West. It's

also his birthday today so we should all wish Andrew Spinner, the page from Windsor West, a happy birthday.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want Sandra and the Speaker to sing Happy Birthday.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I think we'll leave it at that. If any of you have heard me sing, you wouldn't want me to sing anything, let alone Happy Birthday. My talents lie elsewhere.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question today is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday I exposed the fact that the Attorney General was attempting to give himself sweeping and unprecedented powers when it came to collecting personal information and, more specifically, confidential information found inside our medical records. I called this the J. Edgar Hoover clause. You also know that after I raised this issue, the Attorney General went into damage control and subsequently said that in fact your act is going to protect people from what he would like to do in his act.

Later yesterday afternoon we met with some of your legal advisers and they told us that the clause the Attorney General specifically referred to, section 6, in no way affords any protection to Ontarians, in no way prevents the prying eyes of the Attorney General from looking at our confidential medical records.

The way I see it, Madam Minister, you are the defender and the protector of confidential medical records here in Ontario. What are you going to do to make sure this Attorney General doesn't get his eyes on our confidential medical records?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think we made it quite clear yesterday that we were moving forward with the Personal Health Information Privacy Act into consultation, into committee, and everyone will have every opportunity possible to ensure that the legislation that comes forward protects personal health information and protects the collection, use and disclosure of that information. I would hope that you and your caucus would come forward in the spirit of co-operation. As you know, it was your federal colleagues who introduced Bill C-6 which, we have heard from our health stakeholders, is totally inappropriate for personal health information. So we need to introduce this legislation before the introduction—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Again, Madam Minister, you are the protector and defender of the confidentiality that should exist between patients in Ontario and their doctors. You're the person who should stand up to the Attorney General and say, "No, not now, not ever, no way. You can't get your eyes on the medical records of Ontario patients."

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You're telling me your bill is going to go through some special process. That's fine and dandy. What are you going to do to protect us from him and his bill? It's not going through that kind of process. If you won't listen to your own lawyers, then listen to the legal counsel who provided you with a letter today, the legal counsel for the HIV and AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario:

"It has recently come to my attention that Bill 155 contains a provision which authorizes the Attorney General to collect personal information. It is clear that this provision would permit the Attorney General virtually unfettered access to any personal records, including health information held by virtually anyone. I can find nothing in either Bill 155—that's his bill—or Bill 159—that's your bill—"which would serve as a check for accountability purposes on this discretion."

My question to you is, as the protector of medical records and patient-doctor confidentiality, what are you going to do to make sure his eyes don't get on our medical records?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The Attorney General would like to answer the question.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As was explained yesterday, and I regret that the Leader of the Opposition hasn't made reference to section 6 of Bill 159, the way the system works is as follows, and I'm certainly satisfied with this, based on the discussion I've had with counsel in the Ministry of the Attorney General: personal information is referred to in section 19 of Bill 155. That is subject to section 6 of Bill 159, which deals with personal health information. By virtue of those sections, personal health information is excluded from section 19 of Bill 155. So that personal health information is not available to the Attorney General or any other minister, pursuant to section 19 of Bill 155.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I'm going to ask that you take the time and go over your own bill very carefully. Take a look at subsection 19(4). It says the following: "A person ... shall ... despite any confidentiality provision of any other act, disclose the information to the Attorney General." This supersedes any other legislation in the province of Ontario, according to the way you have written it. What this says is that you don't have to consult the Minister of Health; you don't have to go to a court; you don't have to bring an application before a judge. All you need to do is have some suspicion about somebody and then suddenly you are automatically, by virtue of this J. Edgar Hoover clause, entitled to get access to confidential medical records.

I'm back to you, Madam Minister of Health. It is your responsibility to protect confidentiality that should exist between doctors and patients. I ask you the same question one more time on behalf of Ontario patients and our doctors: what are you going to do to make sure this Attorney General doesn't get his eyes on our records?

Hon Mr Flaherty: The accusations and the interpretation made by the member opposite are inaccurate.

As I have indicated, under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, referred to in section 6 of Bill 159, which specifically deals with personal health information—I invite the Leader of the Opposition, who is a lawyer, to read section 6 of Bill 159, which specifically deals with personal health information. If he doesn't want to read it, if he wants to ignore the section, I can't do anything about that. But the way the system works would require that personal health information would not be available under Bill 155, not falling within the definition. The only access would be, as it is today, through a court order, the ministry having satisfied a judge that he or she should grant the order. That's the way the bills are drafted.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is to the Premier. Ontario families today lead hectic, just-in-time lives. The Vanier Institute of the Family recently put out a report telling us that our families are suffering from family-time famine. Parents are having to live through a real time crunch.

I believe we should be doing whatever we can to find ways to help Ontario parents spend more time with their kids, and I thought, until recently, that you believed in the same kind of thing. Through Ontario's Promise you tell us that one of your promises is to help Ontario children develop a better ongoing relationship with their parents.

Why is it, then, if you truly believe that, if you truly believe it's important for parents to have more time rather than less time with their kids, that you are putting your stamp of approval on a law here in the province of Ontario that is going to require that parents spend 60 hours a week at work, away from their kids?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Like most pieces of legislation around here—in fact, just about everything the Leader of the Opposition reads—he's wrong. The legislation is indeed in response to parents, to those who would like more flexibility in their working hours. There is absolutely no change in the number of hours before we get to overtime. There is no change to the maximum number of hours of overtime after 44—maximum number of hours, 48. There's no change at all to that.

What there is is flexibility for those parents who may have one spouse on shift work, whose kids may require more time one week than another. This flexibility is entirely voluntary. It's the exact opposite to what the member alludes. This legislation facilitates more time—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: If only it was that simple, Premier. In 1944, this House passed a law in the province of Ontario saying they were going to cap the workweek at 48 hours. That was considered progressive at that time. If there has been any kind of trend since 50 years ago, it's been one toward reducing that workweek even further.

You can't say you're simply creating an option. What you're doing is putting your stamp of approval, your formal imprimatur, on a new law, and you're telling

Ontario families, and Ontario parents in particular, "I don't give a damn about what your kids think, but as far as I'm concerned, you parents can work 60 hours a week. It's OK if you spend 60 hours a week away from your kids."

Sixty hours a week means 12 hours a day. Add on a couple of hours every day for transportation and you leave the house at 7 o'clock in the morning and you're not back until 9 o'clock at night. If the kids are young, they're in bed by then. If they are older, they've been unsupervised for too long. Parents should have been at home helping out with homework, supervising team sports, and those kinds of things.

You say you are in favour of making sure parents in Ontario spend more time with their kids. That's a laudable objective. How can you reconcile that with the fact that you are giving your formal approval today in Ontario to a law that's going to make parents work 60 hours a week, 60 hours away from their kids?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me assure the member that not only won't I give my approval to that kind of law; if you're proposing it, I'll vote against it.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I thought you had some empathy for the plight of Ontario families. I thought you understood what they go through, how they struggle day in and day out to make ends meet and to find success in life. I thought you understood how hard it is for parents to get that time that is so essential for them to spend with their kids. I thought you understood all of that. Certainly you like to give the impression that you understand that.

I want to know, then, very directly, do you think it's a good idea for parents in Ontario to spend 60 hours a week away from their kids? Throw in two hours of transportation every day and you're looking at 70 hours a week away from their kids. This is your law. You're saying it's their option, but we need to know how you feel about this. Tell us, because parents want to know: do you think it's a good idea for Ontario parents to spend 70 hours a week away from their kids?

Hon Mr Harris: Just as I believed individuals should be free to spend their own money their own way, I believe parents should be free to make that decision in their own way, in their own circumstances. So if parents would like to only work 20 hours one week, this legislation gives them the flexibility to do that without losing any pay.

What I am most astounded at and what I think Ontario families and parents should be shocked at is that you today stand in your place saying that you, a politician, the Legislature, should tell parents when to work, how many hours to work and where to work them. That is astounding to me. That is absolutely astounding, and that is something that we on this side of the House totally reject.

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WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. I think we would all agree that the citizens of Walkerton have been through hell

over the last seven months. As a result of the contaminated water, we know that seven people died. We know that 2,300 people became gravely ill. We know, because of credible reports, that people are still experiencing some illnesses that can't be explained. We know that hundreds of them face the prospect of long-term, chronic health problems.

They have written to you and asked that your government provide a comprehensive health study so that citizens of the community may have a greater understanding of the overall impact and of the future challenges they face. Premier, are you prepared to put together a comprehensive health study for the community, are you prepared to finance that health study, and are you prepared to involve the citizens of Walkerton in the design and implementation of that comprehensive health study?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): As I said this morning, yes, we think it's a good idea.

Mr Hampton: I'm glad to hear that, and I hope the Premier will be forthcoming on when this will begin to happen and the details of the design and implementation.

One of the other things they've asked for is that in view of the continuing uncertainty and the continuing anxiety over the water, in view of the fact that their water contains much higher concentrations of chlorine than any other drinking water in the province, they are asking a commitment of your government to continue to provide bottled water for at least a period of six months, because whatever the authorities or the officials may say, there is a continuing high level of anxiety over the water from the tap.

I'm asking you, Premier, for a commitment that your government will provide at least a six-month supply of bottled water for those Walkerton citizens who continue to have concerns over water quality. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Harris: Yes. As I said this morning, I think it's a good idea.

Mr Hampton: The third issue they are very much concerned about is the issue of a compensation package for Mr Koebel, the former general manager of the public utility and the water supply. Their concern is that before Mr Koebel gives his testimony to the inquiry, any payment to him frankly has the perception of hush money, that he should not be receiving a \$98,000 payment, whether for vacation pay or severance pay, unless and until he has testified before the inquiry.

Premier, your government has not hesitated in ordering municipalities to do things, school boards to do things and hospitals to do things. I'm asking you today to call the mayor and council of Brockton and ask them not to proceed with any kind of financial payments to Mr Koebel until he has provided his testimony to the inquiry. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: As I have indicated, no decision has been made by the council. This is a municipal decision. I think you would agree with me on that front. I have heard that you don't think it's a good idea. You've heard, I think, any members on our side of the House don't think it's a good idea. Nonetheless, we're not privy to the type

of information that council is, whether there are contracts, what's involved there. But the city council is privy to that.

What I can assure you of is that certainly this is not something the province of Ontario is doing. While we are prepared to compensate Walkerton for a considerable amount of the expenditures, working with insurance companies, this is not one of the expenditures for which provincial dollars will be allocated.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):

Another question for the Premier: I want to ask you about another health care crisis and one that is clearly connected to your government. Last night, if you needed an ambulance in the greater Toronto area you might as well have been on the moon, Premier. Some 95% of the hospitals in the greater Toronto area were turning away ambulances last night. Patients across the greater Toronto area were on the Harris highway to nowhere if they were trying to get into an emergency room.

What is really frightening, in fact what is terrifying, is that over half of these hospitals were on critical care bypass. Fifteen hospitals in the greater Toronto area were even turning away the most critically ill patients.

Premier, we're talking about life and death. In the middle of a snowstorm, where transportation is made that much more difficult, people shouldn't have to go across the city to get access to an emergency room. They shouldn't have to sit in an ambulance for two hours because they've already been turned away by two hospitals. Premier, when are you going to put an end to this crisis which is only getting worse? This is as a result of your government's policies. When are you going to listen to the advice you're getting and put an end to a situation that is only getting worse?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Minister of Health can answer.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I would recommend to the leader of the third party that he also recognize the tremendous work that is being done by our health care professionals in emergency rooms. As you know, there have been tremendous strides made since 1998 in order to respond to our growing and aging population and to the increasing utilization of our emergency rooms. I think it is necessary that we commend and congratulate the tremendous progress. We have seen an increased co-operation among physicians, nurses, administrators and the ambulance sector. They have broken down the silos. They have done all they can in order to ensure that the \$725 million we have invested since 1998 is being spent to enhance front-line patient services.

Mr Hampton: The Minister of Health knows that her answer is balderdash. You know that the studies that have been done out there show that this is not a question of increasing utilization. This is your plan, and your plan is not working.

The Joshua Fleuelling inquest: it's almost been a year since Joshua Fleuelling died and the coroner's jury issued its verdict in his death. The coroner's jury said very clearly that your government had to take action before the end of the year. They instructed you to call an immediate moratorium on all hospital and hospital bed closures, and still you proceed with your plans: closing Women's College, closing Wellesley, closing North York Branson. Minister, you are playing Russian roulette with people's lives. Week after week this doesn't get better; it gets worse. Through September, October, November and now, 80% and 85% of GTA hospitals were turning away patients. Yes, doctors are doing wonderful work and nurses are doing wonderful work out there, but you're not doing your job. Do you agree with the coroner's inquest from the Fleuelling inquiry or don't you? And if you don't, please tell us what your alternative plan is before more lives are put at risk.

Hon Mrs Witmer: In all fairness, if you're going to quote from the Fleuelling inquest and if you're going to quote from the jury's recommendations, I think you need to acknowledge the preamble, which clearly states: "We also learned that the problems currently being encountered in the delivery of health care services are not unique to this city or province but, in fact, are evident in many jurisdictions worldwide. They are systemic in nature and not easily solved. They have developed over a period of time."

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The good news is, and the leader of the third party refuses to acknowledge this, that we have moved forward in co-operation with our health care providers since 1998 because we are the first government that undertook a comprehensive review of the problems within the emergency rooms and the pressures that we experience. We have invested \$725 million, we have put in place APPs for physicians, we have hired more nurses, we have increased the amount of money for the ambulance sector—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

WELFARE REFORM

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier.

Ontarians are saddened by your continuing, mean-spirited refusal to grant welfare recipients in Ontario a cost-of-living allowance. That position is so out of keeping with the sentiments you yourself expressed in this House almost eight years ago to the very day.

This is what you said when you stood on this side of the House. You said, "Let me hope that we can do better for you in 1993. For those who didn't get any increase in welfare payments this year, those on welfare, the most vulnerable in our society, found out today for the first time in the eleven and a half years since I've been elected that they'll get 0% next year. That really is a disgrace."

Premier, if it was a disgrace not to deliver an increase back then for 1993, what do you call it if you haven't given an increase in 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000? What do you call it then?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): What I call it is truly helping people. As long as your only program is to pay people to sit at home and do nothing, which even Premier Rae said was ludicrous—in fact it seems to me only the Liberals think this was a good idea. As I recall, this was Bob Rae's statement: "It is ludicrous to continue to pay people more and more money to sit home and do nothing; able-bodied people, capable people. There must be a better way." At least he recognized the problem, which was more than the Liberals have done.

We not only recognized the problem, we tackled the problem. There is a better way than having people become dependent upon a government paycheck. We are constantly looking at ways we can get more and more money into the hands of those who have been dependent upon our welfare rolls.

We do it by education, we do it by training, we do it by jobs, we do it by workfare—all policies that you have opposed. The success to date is close to 600,000 men, women and children who have broken that cycle of dependency that you and the NDP created.

Mr McGuinty: I've got to ask you, Premier, what happened to you? Back in 1992 you expressed such warm, powerful and compelling sentiments. You said it would be nothing less than a disgrace not to give people on welfare a cost-of-living allowance. You made those statements in this Legislature just prior to Christmas. It's only 20 feet from here to there, but you underwent a tremendous conversion of a very negative kind.

You're responsible for 100,000 children who find themselves on welfare in Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr McGuinty: The government members feel that this is somehow a matter of humour. We've got 100,000 kids in this province who are on welfare. The sole provider for those children are the members of this government. Whether those households have enough for toys at Christmas, food at home or winter clothing rests—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Sorry to interrupt. Stop the clock. Order. It's getting a little loud in here. I need to hear the question.

I apologize to the leader of the official opposition for having to get up. I couldn't hear him.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you're responsible for over 100,000 children in Ontario who find themselves living in families who rely entirely on welfare for their subsistence. What it means is that the amount of money they have in their household, whether for food or for clothing or for toys at Christmas, is entirely your responsibility. It's of your doing. These kids need a little bit of help. You told us back in 1992 that you thought it was a disgrace we couldn't award an annual increase for people on welfare. They've gone some seven or eight years now without an increase. I ask you the same thing again: if it

was a disgrace when they missed it for one year, what is it if they miss it for—

The Speaker: The member's time is up.

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member will know that we are now up to 35% higher with our basic welfare rates than the rest of Canada. But we've done so many other things as well. For example, you point out that there are still 100,000 children who today are dependent on welfare. This is quite true and this is a figure that concerns us very much. However, since we've taken office, 250,000 children have come off the welfare rolls. So we've gone from 350,000 children on the welfare rolls to 100,000 children on the welfare rolls. We did it by bringing in policies you opposed. The Scarborough members in your caucus particularly opposed them very vigorously.

In spite of that, 250,000 children have come off the welfare rolls, for which you seem to be so proud to create this dependency. The leader of the Liberal Party thought it was important to tell those at home watching on TV that some members in this House were laughing. They were; they were laughing at you, sir. They're laughing at your ridiculous policies, your silly suggestions and your refusal—

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is also for the Premier. When I was reading yesterday's Toronto Star, I was confused to see some concerns they portrayed regarding organ donation in Ontario. As you may recall, the son of one of the my members of staff has recently undergone a successful kidney transplant. Premier, can you please tell the members of this House what actions the government has taken, given all the work you have done, to increase organ donations?

Interjections.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'm sorry the member from Scarborough-Agincourt and the member from High Park seem to think it is silly that the number of people on waiting lists for organ transplants—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Premier has to answer the question that was asked him.

Hon Mr Harris: Interjections were coming across the floor, and since I have the floor I thought it important we answer that as well.

With regard to the member's question, I too was quite surprised to read the report in the Toronto Star, given that this has been a top priority for the government. No mention seemed to be made of that, that we committed in the throne speech of 1999 to set up a task force, that we set that up in January 2000, that we have accepted the recommendations of that task force.

Quite frankly, the report I saw in the Toronto Star erroneously reported a number of things that simply are factually not correct. I'm surprised. I've sent them a copy of the report. I'm sorry the Toronto Star missed that, along with the dollars that have been allocated. We have gone from a jurisdiction—

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up.

Mr Stewart: Thank you, Premier. This is such an important initiative that I compliment anybody who's involved with it. The article suggests that cost is one disincentive to organ donation in Ontario. I understood the government had a plan to help facilitate more tissue and organ donations in the province of Ontario. Could you tell us what that plan is?

Hon Mr Harris: That is true. The reason I guess the Toronto Star knows that is because the report identified that, the importance of having an independent study to identify those barriers to organ donation. That clearly was one of the key ones there. We recently have announced increased funding for organ and tissue donation transplantation, over \$120 million by 2005, and new legislation, as you know, that we committed to bring forward. A key component of this is to reimburse hospitals for the cost of these transplants so that instead of being a disincentive it will now hopefully be an incentive.

In addition, another key recommendation was that we provide training and dollars for training for professionals in the hospital. The report noted that was one of the things that should be done. They would only know that probably from our report as well.

As I said, we have allocated these dollars. It's a top priority for us. We are sending a copy of the report—

The Speaker: New question.

1450

WELFARE REFORM

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question is to the Premier. Earlier in questioning from my leader, you acknowledged that there are 100,000 kids living on social assistance today in the province of Ontario, and we would all agree that's too many. The reality is that there are.

Yesterday you brought your little empty red wagon express of Ontario's Promise to St James Town, ground zero in the war on poverty, in my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

I want to ask you a question, Premier. If you really want to do something to help those 100,000 kids living on social assistance in the province of Ontario today, will you stand before us today and tell us that your government will end today its awful clawback of dollars that the federal government has directed toward the poorest kids in our province and allow 100,000 children living on social assistance in Ontario to have the full benefit of federal government dollars in their pockets to deal with the poverty that they face every single day? Will you, Premier?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the minister can respond.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): In the design of the national child benefit supplement, the federal government, working with the provinces, established a benefit that was flexible in vari-

ous parts of the country, and this was tremendously important. We do a lot for families on social assistance, but we don't do enough for the working poor, those people with low and modest incomes. That's why in the design of the program we were very clear. We wanted to ensure that we provided a helping hand up.

Having these low- and modest-income families who can realize the benefit of moving from welfare to work, together with the Ontario child care supplement for working families, has been one of the very important reasons for more than a quarter of a million children being able to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Sorry to interrupt the minister. I can't hear when there are conversations. I know it's reasonably lighthearted, but I can't hear when they're going across. I apologize to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I don't know if he was done. He had a couple of more seconds if he needs them. No? Supplementary.

Mr Smitherman: Speaker, you couldn't hear him, but I was listening carefully and unfortunately I could. The answer from that minister and from that government is that they're quite content to see those children who are living on social assistance get nothing.

The word from the Premier yesterday in answer to the question was to talk about these generous benefits. I want to ask the government the question, and I want to ask that minister in particular: before you stand up one more time and tell us all that you're doing for those people who are living on social assistance, name a family you know and love that you would dare to stand in front of and say, "You receive a very generous benefit, and money that is directed to you ought not be provided to you." Name them, Minister.

Hon Mr Baird: I'm not going to stand in my place and suggest for one moment that living on social assistance in this province or in any province in the country is something that would be generous and something that we would want to encourage. What I would say very directly to the honourable member is that we are working exceptionally hard to rededicate our efforts to eliminate poverty in this province, to create jobs, to provide the supports so that people can realize the dignity that comes with a job, to give them a hand up, to give them supports, to give them more training, to give them more child care, to give them more transportation allowances, to give them more opportunity. As long as there's one single child in this province living in poverty, it's one child too many, and that's why we are rededicating our efforts. But I will tell the member opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Last warning, guys.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): You guys are too warm and fuzzy for me.

The Speaker: There we go. Last warning for the member for Windsor West. When I stand up, you can't just continue to yell across. It's almost like I'm not even here when you say it. This has got to be your last warn-

ing. I'm sorry, but I can't continue to do it. I know it's lighthearted today, but we can't continue on when you're doing that, especially when I'm standing. I'm afraid it's going to have to be your last warning.

Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Mr Baird: I would also say to my Liberal friends across the road that this is a policy that Jean Chrétien, this federal government, agreed to. This is the whole process in which this policy was designed, and every single Liberal MP from Ontario voted yes. They said this was a good policy, to provide more supports to those working families with low and modest incomes. We're not going to turn our backs on those families. We're going to continue to provide that helping hand up. We're going to continue to help provide people with the tools they need to get—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

TOURISM

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Tourism. During a recent interview with Thunder Bay's CBQ-FM radio, the president of the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association stated, "Quebec is doing a better job than Ontario of selling its snowmobile tourism."

Tourism is big business in my area of York North. Snowmobiling generates additional revenues for local businesses during the winter season, when it's most needed. Minister, what are you doing to promote snowmobiling in Ontario?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): I want to thank the member for her question and reassure her that this province has committed over \$170 million to market tourism and to market our province as a premier four-season destination.

It is true that Quebec has an excellent snowmobile trail system, but we have 49,000 kilometres of trail here, 15,000 more than the province of Quebec.

I also want to share with her the fact that our ministry has partnered with the Northern Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership in northern Ontario. We've transferred about \$3.2 million so that they can market winter activities throughout the entire province for us.

They expect to reach about 7.5 million households with information in snowmobile magazines, in newspaper inserts in the shoulder states and in our neighbouring provinces. We're also partnering with a \$60,000 television promotion program with the New VR to promote Ontario as a great winter destination.

Mrs Munro: Minister, it's estimated that 250,000 visitors come to Ontario each year for a snowmobile vacation and that winter travel from the US to Canada is projected to grow significantly in 2001. What are you doing to ensure the sustainability of the trails so that they are safe and in good condition, so that we can continue to attract a growing number of visitors?

Hon Mr Jackson: The province recognizes that the snowmobile industry alone brings in about \$22 million

worth of revenue to our province, so it's good business to promote this and to make sure it's safe and that our trails are well groomed. Our government has made a commitment that before Christmas we hope to have second reading of Bill 101, an act to improve the sustainability and safety of Ontario's snowmobile trails.

This is a major undertaking, and we're convinced that with additional resources, with commitment to improving the quality of our trails and expanding them, we will be able to demonstrate to North America that this is the premier location to do snowmobiling in North America.

We're partnered with the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, which developed the top trail guide, which gives useful safety tips, and we want to acknowledge the leadership of that association in promoting for recreational use and for tourism the great sport of snowmobiling.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. There is great concern in northeastern Ontario that your government is going to announce that you're going to radically downsize the ONTC, the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, that you're going to discontinue the Northlander and that you're dramatically going to reduce the contribution the ONTC makes to the northeastern Ontario economy.

Premier, you are the one elected government member north of the French River. I'm asking you, as a member of this Legislature from northern Ontario, to give your commitment that your government is not going to dramatically downsize the ONTC, that you're not going to discontinue the Northlander and that you're going to continue to ensure that the ONTC plays a vital transportation and economic role in northeastern Ontario. As the government member for northeastern Ontario, are you prepared to make those commitments today?

1500

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the member is aware that the ONTC itself has commissioned a study to take a look at how they can improve services and see services improve to those in northeastern Ontario. The consultant has made some recommendations, which the commission has made public and forwarded on to the government. They rest now with the Minister of Northern Development. The minister, I believe, is planning to be in North Bay, which is the head office of the ONTC, tomorrow to discuss the government's response to the recommendations.

What I can tell the member is that there are a couple of key priorities that we will bear in mind in any decision we make. Number one is that we are concerned about improving the passenger and freight service that is provided to northeastern Ontario. We have to look at how that may be done. We'll have to bear the report in mind. The second—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Premier's time is up.

Mr Hampton: I heard a lot of rambling there, so I'm going to ask the question again. First, we're asking for a commitment that the Northlander will not be discontinued and will not be downsized. Second, we're asking for a commitment that the ONTC in general will not be downsized, that it will continue to make the same contribution in terms of transportation and in terms of jobs and economic activity that it makes now. Can you make those specific commitments, Premier, as the only elected government member from northeastern Ontario?

Hon Mr Harris: Quite frankly, we're not prepared to accept the paltry level of commitment that the ONTC makes now. We think freight rates are substantially too high. Many customers in northern Ontario have told us this. They have told us that service is not what it should be. I'm actually shocked that you, as the leader of the New Democratic Party, which actually still has members in northeastern Ontario—don't ask me why, but it still does—are now advocating that that level of service is OK, that it is enough, that we shouldn't be aggressively trying to improve that level of service, lower freight rates, be more responsive, so we can have even more jobs in northeastern Ontario. That's the goal of this government; that's the goal of our minister. I hope, like on a number of issues, your members from northeastern Ontario disagree with you.

ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORY

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question today is for the Minister of Health. It's regarding the looming crisis facing the animal health lab at the University of Guelph. This is the Ontario centre for animal disease control. It monitors and investigates outbreaks, safeguarding the public against such deadly diseases as the West Nile virus, mad cow disease and E coli. Funded jointly by the university and the Ministry of Agriculture, the centre is the key to ensuring public health and food safety.

Incredibly, your government seems to have forgotten some very important lessons about safeguarding public health and food safety. The lab services division has already been cut by 20% in 1997. Now another \$5 million to \$7 million has come out of the OMAFRA-university agreement. This centre is in grave danger of again having its budget cut, diminishing its effectiveness and jeopardizing public safety.

Minister, have you learned nothing from Walkerton? It's your duty and your responsibility as the Minister of Health to be the guardian of public health in this province. How can you sit by as your cabinet colleagues endanger the health of our citizens and the safety of our food?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The Minister of Agriculture would like to respond.

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'm glad the member had the opportunity to visit the animal health laboratory in Guelph to see the good work that goes on there. I trust that you were impressed with the scope of the services and the high-calibre analysis carried out by the technical expertise of the staff. I'd like to point out to the member that the level of diagnostic testing at the animal health laboratory has not been reduced. Current funding is over \$5 million, as it has been since 1997, and there are no plans to change that level of funding.

Mr Peters: This is really unbelievable, you know? Last week we asked the Minister of the Environment about safe drinking water. He sloughed the question off to the Minister of Agriculture. Today we ask the Minister of Health about public health and public safety, and she sloughs it off to the Minister of Agriculture. I ask again, has this government learned nothing from the Walkerton tragedy? Do you not realize that what it takes to prevent such a tragedy from happening is that those people are in place?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. We need to hear the question. Sorry for the interruption.

Mr Peters: We're talking, Minister—it should be the Minister of Health—about public health, food safety and the potential for the outbreak of life-threatening diseases like mad cow disease and E coli if this centre's budget is cut once again. Your government, Premier and Minister of Agriculture, is putting public health and food safety at risk, all because of your ideological addiction to cost-cutting. Is waiting for the first death in Ontario from one of these diseases your answer for action? Minister, will you ensure that there will be no more cuts? This lab must have increased funding to ensure the well-being of all Ontarians. Will your government stop and learn from Walkerton? Will you guarantee that this lab will receive every publicly funded dollar necessary to do its job? Will you guarantee, Minister, that there will be a capital commitment to ensure that the technology that exists within that lab is first-class and they're not having to continue to buy used equipment like they are right now?

Hon Mr Hardeman: I find it somewhat interesting that the member opposite would suggest some impropriety in having a question that relates to the animal health laboratory answered by the Minister of Agriculture. I find that rather passing strange.

I want to say that the laboratory has been doing a business review this June to increase the effectiveness of the laboratory's testing program. The goal of this review is to improve the quality of the testing expertise and service to better meet the needs of veterinarians and live-stock and poultry producers. As part of this review, provisions were not reduced, as the member indicates, but relocated from Kemptville and Ridgetown to the main laboratory in Guelph. In addition to this, internal funding for Ontario's veterinary services program has increased by 35% over the past year. This increase reflects the increased commitment to animal health outbreak management and surveillance.

I thank the member opposite for visiting the laboratory and for asking the question today so the people of Ontario will know the improvements that we have made to the animal health laboratories in the province of Ontario.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Minister, a few weeks ago and in fact several times now in this assembly I've asked you about the status of the wine trade between the European Union and Ontario. As the minister knows, and most members of the assembly should know, we continually are denied access to the European Union for our wines, despite the fact we've passed legislation including the VQA, which assures quality standards. At the time, Minister, you didn't seem very optimistic about the situation with the European Union; however, I understand there's been some progress made between the European Union and Ontario specifically regarding Ontario icewines that carry VQA approval. Could you please share with the House what has come to pass in the past few weeks and how it may change things for Ontario's icewine makers?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I thank the member from Niagara Falls for the question. I am pleased to say that there does seem to be some progress on this issue. Our government had planned to begin an advertising campaign this week to let wine consumers know that Ontario, through the LCBO, is the largest purchaser of European wine in the world. Last year alone we bought almost \$400 million of EU products, while Europe has virtually closed the door on our world-class, award-winning wines. Our intent was to encourage consumers to consider this lack of fairness in their holiday purchase decisions. However, we've postponed our advertising based on a communication indicating that the European Union is now ready to open the door to Ontario icewines. The issue is now in the hands of the federal government.

Applause.

Mr Maves: That sounds somewhat encouraging. It sounds like the Ontario government and our winemakers, and of course our grape growers, have done a great job in pushing this fight for fair treatment to a successful conclusion. But I want to caution my colleagues on my side of the aisle for their applause, because at the end of your statement you made reference to the federal government. We haven't had the greatest of experiences with the federal government on assistance with this issue.

Could you please explain how the federal government is involved in this issue and what assurances you have received from them that they will make sure the progress Ontario has made to date will not be lost?

1510

Hon Mr Runciman: I believe this breakthrough agreement could be announced as early as next week, when the president of the European Union visits Canada. The European Union offer is now in the hands of the

federal government, and I'm hoping to speak with federal ministers later today or tomorrow to encourage their support. Because of our government's efforts and the support of Ontario's wine producers and grape growers, we've been able to make significant headway in negotiations with the European Union. I sincerely hope that the federal government doesn't allow, for whatever reason, this golden opportunity to slip away.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question was intended for the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I think his books are still here; we'll just take a quick moment.

You may proceed.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Premier, today a report by UNICEF again confirms that your government, not business, needs to invest in Ontario's children. This report specifically mentions the Early Years Study and its call for a provincial program for early childhood development that would be as important to preparing the children of Ontario for success as are the elementary and secondary school systems. UNICEF states that government leaders seem blinded to the one investment that almost guarantees returns: ensuring children a good start in life.

It's time for action. Numerous recent reports have highlighted the pressing need for programs to support children. I have them here and I will deliver them to you. They include UNICEF's *The State of the World's Children 2000*; *child poverty in Ontario*, the *Urban Aboriginal Child Poverty report*; *You Bet I Care!*, a survey of child care centres in Canada; the *Education Improvement Commission report*; and your own *Early Years Study*. When are you going to listen? When will you act to implement affordable, quality early child development programs in Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I really appreciate the question. I find a couple of things, though, that I would comment on.

There is one United Nations study that says poverty is down substantially in the province of Ontario, particularly for children, as the child study and others indicate. Many of them credit the government of Ontario and policy changes and programs we've brought in for this improvement.

The second thing is, I was a little surprised that the same UN study held out the model of Cuba as an example. The last time I checked, not too many families are rushing out of Ontario trying to get into Cuba.

Nonetheless, let me say that a large part of our agenda right from day one, in the Common Sense Revolution, were numerous Head Start programs. In our very first budget, even with an \$11-billion deficit, were numerous Head Start programs to assist those kids who are at risk, so we have targeted our resources in that area and continue to do so. Obviously we reject—

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up. Supplementary.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Last week, the Education Improvement Commission released its final report. To no one's surprise, the report confirmed yet again that your government needs to do more for Ontario's children. The first recommendation of the first chapter is that your government should strengthen its commitment to early child development by ensuring access to affordable, quality child care. Your support of Ontario's children, the challenge fund, is conditional on the participation of the business community. The Ontario Liberal Party and Dalton McGuinty believe that our children should have the unconditional support of the government.

The federal government has committed to the children of Ontario over \$800 million for the next five years in the early childhood development accord. You have been challenged to match those dollars and you have been silent. Your \$30-million challenge fund is a lot less than the \$800 million, and that \$30 million has been announced and re-announced and is still sitting in the bank.

Premier, Ontario's parents are tired of ribbon cutting. It's time to act. Will you commit today to use the \$800 million from the federal government for new children's programs, and will you match that money dollar for dollar?

Hon Mr Harris: You're quite right. After we led the way in the first ministers' conferences two years in a row, we finally did get the federal government to commit a few dollars to the Early Years Study. They didn't do it, though, until the campaign, and we haven't seen details of it. If it's the same as their universal child care program, we probably won't see a cent of it, but we do applaud at least mention of it in the last campaign, if no dollars in the previous years.

Since we've taken office, we have brought in numerous programs, including the Early Years Study and the challenge fund, as you mentioned. We've brought in a number of tax initiatives; you know our tax cuts are aimed primarily at low-income Ontarians, to help those children with lower incomes. Healthy Babies, Healthy Children; Better Beginnings—as you have heard, the list goes on and on.

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up.

New question. The member for Durham.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister of Labour. I'm going to talk to him. I appreciate your help. I don't need your comments when I do something in here. I hear you yelling out. It's not going to be acceptable. I'm stopping the clock. I'm the Speaker now. I'm going to make the decisions.

And I say to the member for Niagara Centre, he is going to get the question in. As you know, on a lot of occasions, including yesterday, I worked hard for the member for Toronto-Danforth to get the question. He is going to get the question.

The member for Durham.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Thank you, Mr Speaker. It's so seldom that I get to speak in the House. My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. People didn't do that to your member at the end. We don't want to get into that. He still had the time; he's still going to get the question. I'd appreciate it if we wouldn't bang the desks because I say this in all sincerity: I do work hard to get down to your questions, and a lot of days I could have not had them.

The member for Durham, to ask the question.

Mr O'Toole: Minister, as I travelled across northern Ontario this summer on government committee business, I was so impressed with how beautiful the province is and also recognized the great distances that are involved. I'm sure in your extensive travels throughout the north in your role as Minister of Northern Development and Mines you're very much aware of the great distances and the inconveniences for communities that have to travel long distances to make connections. It's essential that our roads are safe and reliable, as should all infrastructure be. The harsh climate in northern Ontario can cause increasing wear and tear on our roads and further impact transportation costs. Road conditions, as you know, could impact everything from the economy to essential services in Ontario. As the minister responsible for the north, what steps have you taken to ensure that northerners have high way systems that make it possible to overcome these challenges?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I'm pleased to have a chance to respond to the member for Durham and his question. I'll let the record stand. The Peterson Liberals, in their five years in office, invested a total of \$420 million in northern Ontario highways. The Bob Rae government in their five years, with a guy like Gilles Bisson pushing for the dollars, did increase it to \$611 million. But under the Mike Harris government, there was not \$600 million but \$950 million, including the four-laning of Highway 11, the four-laning of Highway 69 and moving 69 south of Sudbury; and major investments, for example Highway 502 in Dryden.

In northern Ontario now, under Mike Harris, there are two seasons: there's the winter season and there's the construction season.

1520

PETITIONS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas patients requiring eye care in Niagara are faced with a shortage of ophthalmologists and, as a

result, are compelled to wait several weeks to secure an appointment with an ophthalmologist;

"Whereas Niagara patients who require potentially vision-saving eye surgery have to, in many cases, wait for several months to have that surgery scheduled;

"Whereas, while the shortage of ophthalmologists is occurring, the removal of billing caps on these medical specialists provides a temporary but essential easing of the health care crisis;

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health's solution of removing the exemptions of the billing cap and forcing patients from Niagara to travel along the very busy Queen Elizabeth Highway to receive treatment in Hamilton is unacceptable;

"Whereas Dr Jeffrey Sher, chief of eye surgery at Hamilton Health Sciences Corp, has written to the Minister of Health informing her that Hamilton does not have a sufficient number of practising ophthalmologists to handle additional cases from Niagara;

"Be it resolved that the Ontario Ministry of Health remove the cap on billing for ophthalmologists in Niagara until such time as Niagara is no longer an underserved area."

I affix my signature, as I am in full agreement.

SAFE DRINKING WATER LEGISLATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I continue to get petitions urging the government to pass into law the Safe Drinking Water Act. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario have the right to receive clean and safe drinking water; and

"Whereas clean, safe drinking water is a basic human entitlement and essential for the protection of public health; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario have the right to receive accurate and immediate information about the quality of water; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and the government of Ontario have failed to protect the quality of drinking water in Ontario; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and the government of Ontario have failed to provide the necessary financial resources to the Ministry of the Environment; and

"Whereas the policies of Mike Harris and the government of Ontario have endangered the environment and the health of the citizens of Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Immediately restore adequate funding and staffing to the Ministry of the Environment;

"(2) Immediately pass into law Bill 96, the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2000."

I will affix my signature to this because I fully support the petition.

NOISE BARRIER

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the construction, in spring 2001, of a flyover at the intersection of Highway 8 and Conestoga Parkway in Kitchener will generate a high level of traffic noise for the residents in the Wilfred and Dellroy Avenue area, we the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That a noise barrier be erected from the intersection of Highway 8 and Conestoga Parkway on the east side, south of Highway 8, for a distance of approximately a half-mile, more or less, to give noise relief to the residents on that side of the highway."

I affix my signature.

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I have a petition regarding Bill 64 and the Safe Streets Act.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas charities such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraisers on streets, sidewalks and parking lots;

"Whereas the Safe Streets Act, 1999, effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities; and

"Whereas charitable organizations are dependent on these fundraisers to raise much-needed money ...;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the government of Ontario amend provincial legislation by passing Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act, 2000, to allow charitable organizations to conduct fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots."

I affix my name to these signatures with pride.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got petitions from many concerned citizens around this issue. It reads:

"Whereas the annual rent increase guideline for multi-unit residential dwellings in Ontario increases every year more than the rate of inflation and more than the cost-of-living increase for most tenants;

"Whereas no new affordable rental housing is being built by the private sector, despite the promise that the implementation of vacancy decontrol in June 1998 would encourage new construction;

"Whereas one in four tenants pays over 50% of their income on rent, over 100,000 people on the waiting list for social housing, and homelessness has increased as a result of unaffordable rents;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement an immediate province-wide freeze on rents which will stop all guideline increases, above-guideline increases and increases to maximum rent for all sitting tenants in Ontario for a period of at least two years."

I support this strongly and my name goes on this petition.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a number of petitions in support of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to number plates for historic vehicles. In fact, I've had a number of constituents contact my office in support of this legislation.

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to be used on vintage automobiles."

I support this legislation and hereby affix my signature to these petitions.

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas charities such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraisers on streets, sidewalks and parking lots; and

"Whereas the Safe Streets Act, 1999, effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities; and

"Whereas charitable organizations are dependent on these fundraisers to raise much-needed money and awareness;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the government of Ontario amend provincial legislation by passing Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act, 2000"—standing in the name of Bruce Crozier—"to allow charitable organizations to conduct

fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots."

This is signed by many of my constituents from Spanish and by Spanish's favourite son, Brent St Denis.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist or a medical doctor be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers a bundle. It is the leading cause of hospitalization in Canada. Some people with diabetes simply cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing diabetes. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood and even reuse lancets and needles. These budget-saving measures can often have disastrous health care consequences;

"Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes. We think it is in all Ontarians' and the government's best interest to support people with diabetes with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain the best glucose control possible. As you all know, good control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control."

I affix my signature.

1530

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas charities such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, the Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraising on streets, sidewalks and parking lots; and

"Whereas the Safe Streets Act, 1999 effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities; and

"Whereas charitable organizations are dependent on these fundraisers to raise much-needed money and awareness;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the government of Ontario amend provincial legislation by passing Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act, 2000, in the name of Mr Crozier from Essex, to allow charitable organizations to conduct fund-

raising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots."

It's signed by a number of petitioners from Blenheim, Leamington, Tilbury and Chatham, and I affix my name to this petition.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas children are exposed to sexually explicit material in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit material;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation which will:

"Create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to sexually explicit material in retail establishments;

"Make it illegal to sell, rent, or loan sexually explicit materials to minors."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas charities such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, the Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraisers on streets, sidewalks and parking lots; and

"Whereas the Safe Streets Act, 1999 effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities; and

"Whereas charitable organizations are dependent on these fundraisers to raise money and awareness;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask the government of Ontario to amend provincial legislation by passing Bruce Crozier's Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act, 2000, to allow charitable organizations to conduct fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots and we ask that all members in the Ontario government, including members of the Tory Conservative caucus, support this legislation."

I hereby affix my signature.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition here from a number of people from the community of Kapuskasing and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the northern Ontario health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;

"Whereas a recently released Oracle research poll confirms that 92% of Ontarians support equal health travel funding;

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is a true example that these petitions do make a difference because, as I understand, it might be because of these petitions that a new bill comes through, and I'm sure you'll be happy to support that. This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole"—a good colleague of mine—"and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to be used on vintage automobiles."

I'm happy to sign my name to it and I'm going to pass this on to a good page here, Geoff.

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have petitions here from Huron-Bruce, Sarnia-Lambton, Bruce-Grey, Waterloo-Wellington, Lanark-Carleton, Oxford, Lambton-Kent, Kenora-Rainy River, Parry Sound-Muskoka and Nickel Belt, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas charities such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraisers on streets, sidewalks and parking lots;

"Whereas the Safe Streets Act, 1999 effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities, and

"Whereas charitable organizations are dependent on these fundraisers to raise much-needed money and awareness;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the government of Ontario amend provincial legislation by passing Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act, 2000, standing in the name of Mr Crozier, to allow charitable organizations to conduct fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots."

In support, I affix my signature and ask James to deliver it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CORRECTIONS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION EN MATIÈRE DE SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 29, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 144, An Act to establish accountability in correctional services, to make offenders demonstrate that they are drug-free, to set rules for offenders to earn their release, to give the Board of Parole a say in earned release decisions, and to change the name of the Board of Parole / Projet de loi 144, Loi visant à instituer la responsabilisation au sein des services correctionnels, à obliger les délinquants à démontrer qu'ils ne font pas usage de substances intoxicantes, à fixer les règles que doivent suivre les délinquants pour mériter leur libération, à permettre à la Commission des libérations conditionnelles d'intervenir dans les décisions en matière de libération méritée et à changer le nom de la Commission des libérations conditionnelles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 4, 2000, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Sampson has moved second reading of Bill 144, An Act to establish accountability in correctional services, to make offenders demonstrate that they are drug-free, to set rules for offenders to earn their release, to

give the Board of Parole a say in earned release decisions, and to change the name of the Board of Parole.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1537 to 1542.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Harris, Michael D.	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Stewart, R. Gary
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Mariand, Margaret	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan	Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted
Brown, Michael A.	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Kormos, Peter	Smitherman, George
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 31.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 4, 2000, the bill is ordered for third reading.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 7, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 147, An Act to revise the law related to employment standards / Projet de loi 147, Loi portant révision du droit relatif aux normes d'emploi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 11, 2000, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Stockwell has moved second reading of Bill 147, An Act to revise the law related to employment standards.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1546 to 1551.

The Acting Speaker: Order. We're voting on Bill 147, moved by Mr Stockwell.

All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Mariand, Margaret	Tilson, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Eves, Ernie L.	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Young, David
Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Levac, David	
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 53; the nays are 31.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 11, 2000, this bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on general government.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 6, 2000, on the motion to extend the House sitting until Thursday, December 21, 2000.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): House motion number 10: I believe Mr McMeekin has the floor.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to rise to continue debate. As you may recall, we got to the witching hour the other night and I was cut off at a couple of minutes to midnight, so I'm pleased to pick up on that.

Since this debate is about time and how it can most effectively be used, I thought what I might do today is make some observations based on my brief time in this House; to state some principles and values that are of some import to me and, I suspect, other members of this House; and to make some helpful suggestions and even offer some free advice as to how we might work more effectively in this Legislative Assembly. You've heard of the song *50 Ways to Leave Your Lover*; I'd like to offer 40 ways to cut red tape and work more effectively together. I thought I'd take a bit of a stab at that.

This place is about change, about representing people and about being the crucible of democracy. So I want to talk a little about politics and some of the principles that got me involved in political life. I think it was the late, great Sonny Bono, the entertainer and former US congressman, who suggested that entertainment and politics were a lot alike: that people basically want great lyrics and a good beat. I want to say for the record that I often see neither great lyrics nor a good beat offered up in this House, and I lament that profoundly.

I want to talk a little about some of the principles that I think ought to guide us in terms of what we talk about in this place and how we use our time. I've always believed that government has a positive role to play and can be an instrument for good, allowing individuals to make a difference. I believe in government. As one who has professed that politics can make a difference, it's great to be in this place and to have a chance to prove that. I remember when I first told my dad, some 25 years ago, that I was going to get involved in municipal politics. He said, "Politics? You were always such an honest boy." That's just an observation; that's so often the perception about those of us in the public service.

I know that while politicians campaign in poetry, we usually govern in prose, and we see that kind of prose every day in this House. That said, if at the end of the day all we have left is what we truly believe in, then we can't have failed. I think it was Thomas Jefferson who once said that on matters of taste, swim with the stream, and on matters of principle, stand like a rock.

I also want to suggest in this chamber today that not enough people take politics seriously or get involved in politics or believe their involvement would make a difference. I suspect there may even be some members of this House who believe that—backbenchers who, for whatever reason or combination of reasons, feel excluded from some of the decision-making structures here—and I think there are some things we might do to change that.

I want to say too—and I've been giving a lot of thought to this—that politics only makes a difference and is only important to the extent it contributes significantly to building a stronger, healthier community. I've never believed that power should be concentrated in fewer and

fewer hands or decisions made in increased isolation from those impacted at the expense of community.

That having been said, I want to also say, particularly in this season, that the angels are seldom all on one side of any issue. Perhaps that's why politics is so frequently referred to as the art of compromise. I would hope that as the days unfold here we could learn from that.

1600

I'm struck with the reality that unless you're the Oklahoma bomber, most people choosing between good and evil would choose to be on the side of the angels and would choose to do the right thing. It's not decisions between good and evil that are so tough; it's those decisions between competing goods. In that context I've been struck, since arriving in this place, with how many vested interests there are that would have us pander to our worst instincts and really almost make an expression of compassion seem like something we should be embarrassed about. I don't think we should have government that's afraid to use words like common sense and compassion in the same sentence.

We hear a lot of talk from time to time about restructuring and about some of the things that need to happen. Private-public partnerships would be one. By the way, I want to say for the record that I think private-public partnerships can be done right. There are lots of wonderful examples. I think of the municipality I had the privilege of being mayor of for six years. Our number one priority was to build a multi-purpose health and fitness centre. It was something we couldn't do on our own; it would have cost us about \$10 million. We were able to partner with the YMCA, and by contributing \$4 million each, we were able to undertake what I think was one of the most creative entrepreneurial private-public partnerships anywhere in Ontario.

Private-public partnerships can work if you're careful about who you're partnering with and that there are good standards. Why do I say that? Because I believe we should only have the government we need. But while we should only have the government we need, we must insist on all the government we require. If there's no other lesson we learn from the tragedy of Walkerton, for example, it should be that. There are areas where we should be looking at making sure the standards are clear. That's not to preclude the private-public partnerships I spoke of earlier.

I want to note something that I think has stood me and some of my more learned colleagues in good stead over the years: all true learning begins with the simple phrase "I do not know the answer to that." I want to suggest here today that it would be very helpful if we could say that to each other a little more often, rather than assuming we always have the answers.

When all is said and done, love really does make the world go 'round. It may sound corny to say that, but I think that's true. In that context, we as people who have a particular role in terms of moving from case to cause advocacy—where we take a specific example of an injustice or concern and try to develop social policy so that

the benefits of that policy accrue to more than just the individual involved—should always be reminded that all of us must stand against oppression, despair and indifference, especially when it can rightly be suggested to us that we might stand to benefit from that. We need to commit to courses of action directed by reason, supported by principle and designed to achieve the greatest good.

In that context I think we, as political leaders, should be going out of our way to teach compassion and to resist the tide of opinion that would seek to make any denial of compassion seem respectable. When all is said and done, if we turn our backs on the most vulnerable—the aged, the disabled and the poor—who will be there to speak for us when we're weak or dependent?

In that context I want to point out, and maybe this is the philosophical difference, that I don't believe you help the unfortunate by helping the fortunate and expecting private charity to do the rest, all the while knowing that it can't and it won't. I believe that what's right with our community, with this great province of Ontario, can correct whatever is wrong with this province of Ontario and that we need to be conscious of that when we're looking at trying to bring out the best in people.

If I can move off principles to some observations and suggestions, I want to suggest that in today's politics there shouldn't be left and right any more, that there's only right and wrong. We all too often forget that while there are some things wrong in Ontario that need fixing—that's what we're about, I suppose—we need to celebrate what's right in Ontario. What's right with Ontario is its people.

I have seen children who dream the biggest of dreams and teachers who go out of their way to make those dreams come true. I've seen health care workers struggling on the edges, trying to cope with cutbacks. I've met literally hundreds of people living on the margins of poverty who struggle every single day just to put food on the table. We had some discussion about that earlier in question period.

Government is about listening to and caring for people. It's not some bourgeois boys' club meeting in some exclusive tree house somewhere, making decisions in isolation from people.

I worked here some 25 years ago. Mr Davis was the Premier then. I want to just say, for what it's worth, that Mr Davis, and I suggest Messrs Frost and Robarts before him, understood common sense and more importantly the common good. I don't always get the feeling in this assembly that we have that same sense. Someone asked me a couple of days ago what the major difference is between today and 25 years ago, and I suggested this place has really lost its sense of humour. I want to offer that up as an observation for members present.

There was a time when someone would get up and ask a question of the Premier and the Premier would say, "That's a darned good question. I wish I had a darned good answer. If you leave it with me, maybe tomorrow or the next day I'll have a darned good answer." There was a time in this House when someone would get up and

make a suggestion and someone would say, "You know what? You're absolutely right. We ought to roll that into the legislation. We ought to make that happen." There was a time when we didn't have to rely on no-fault insurance, when we didn't get into a place and a space where we were always finger pointing, where there was the possibility of actually pointing some direction and not just fingers.

Today I get the sense from both sides of the House—I'm not pointing at anyone in particular; in fact I think while no one's guilty, maybe we're all responsible—that we could learn something from our forefathers who didn't have as pronounced a need perhaps to always blame somebody else. I dream of the day when the Premier of this province, or one of his many cabinet ministers, might get up and say, "You're absolutely right. We really screwed up on that one. You know what? We're going to do better. We're going to fix that," rather than saying, "Well, 10 years ago you wanted to open the Keele Street dump," or whatever it was.

I think there are a number of things we can do that could really help us forge some partnerships in this place and, when all is said and done, enable us to be more effective representatives of those we have the privilege of serving. We need to learn to stop going to the wall on petty and insignificant issues, letting significant issues slip away in the process. We need to learn to refrain from drawing lines in the sand or from finding the sand and then burying our heads in it. We need to take a shot at what's ailing us rather than shots at each other. There are some ways I think we could do that. I don't want to be just rhetorical, I want to be helpful, so I want to just take a minute to outline a few of those.

1610

When Mr Davis was Premier the use of select committees was far more pronounced. A good example of that would have been the garbage issue around the Adams mine. I suggested to the Minister of the Environment that that would be a perfect example of where a select committee might be useful. There was a lot of finger pointing going on, I think quite appropriately. No one seemed to have the answer. That clearly is an issue that is beyond municipalities, that we need to be working on together. I'd like to see a little less partisanship around here and a little more getting on with the job. The selective use of select committees I think would be a good way of doing that.

I'd like to see the government respond a little bit more positively to some of the good questions that are asked. It might even be helpful if once in a while people on this side of the House applauded initiatives from the other side of the House and vice versa. I don't think we do enough of that.

We need to be conscious of opportunities to invite each other into one another's tent, so to speak. I know politics is partisan and that isn't going to happen to as great an extent as maybe some would like, but by listening to each other and maybe even the government saying to the Liberal side or the NDP side, the third party,

"What is it you want to see happen in this session of the Legislature? Is there a piece of legislation you want to get through?" I think that would be an excellent way to go.

I'd like to see a lot more free votes in the House. In fact, I fantasize about a day when legislation would come in and up in the top corner there would be a little box. Beside the box would be the words, "Failure to pass this bill in its current form will constitute a vote of non-confidence in the government and lead to an immediate provincial election." Any other legislation we would be free to vote on, so that the 103 men and women across this province who have the awesome responsibility and obligation to be in this place and to be about making a difference, which is what this is all about, could do that. I think we could do that through some free votes.

I'll wind up by saying you cannot discover new oceans unless you're prepared to lose sight of the shore. I'd like to do some of that a little bit more often, and I invite other members of the House.

My mother used to say, "Son, you will always be judged by the company that you don't believe anybody else knows you keep." I want to be judged by the company I keep in this place. I think that by working together we can express much more positively for the people of Ontario that we're about the common good and about real common sense and about making a difference in this province.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Much in the vein of the previous speaker, I'd like to spend the short time I have, given we're dealing with a calendar motion that pretty much opens up the prospect of discussing what we please and not being out of order—I'd like to first comment on the fact that this evening Hamilton city council will be holding their last historic meeting of the city council prior to the new city coming into existence on January 1, 2001.

A few weeks ago, under the leadership of Regional Chairman Terry Cooke, we in the community saw the last meeting of regional council. Let me say right at the outset that notwithstanding the philosophical and political differences I've had with Terry Cooke, and they're strong, he and I go back quite a ways. We tend to refer to it as going through political boot camp together. We were both elected to city and regional councils in 1985, both of us for the first time—very young, very eager, very enthusiastic, very green and totally lost, quite frankly. I'm sure Ted can refer to his first time, which actually was on Hamilton city council, ward 7, I believe. So history is an interesting teacher.

I want to say that I think Terry Cooke has provided, on balance—I know he will appreciate the "on balance" part—excellent leadership. On a personal level, his integrity, his honesty and his friendship have meant a lot to me over the years. I wish him well as he steps down now. On January 1, he begins a new career in the private sector, a challenging and lucrative one. His mother didn't raise any fool there. I wish him the very best.

In large part, we have a new city on January 1 because of his leadership. For some, that will make him an eternal

villain, and for others, a hero, and for most, the catalyst who brought about what inevitably should have happened for the best of our community in the long run.

With regard to this evening, I don't know how much the snowstorm we've just experienced is going to limit the turnout. Certainly my business here this evening does not allow me to attend, which I regret very much because my heart is always with Hamilton. This is a historic evening and it has meant a lot to me that part of my life has been as a Hamilton alderman.

This evening, as a community, we say goodbye to a number of outstanding aldermen. By the way, historically, that's the last reference in our community to aldermen. For those of us who have that title, we now officially become part of history. Of course, they will be known as councillors in the future. We are losing a number of outstanding aldermen as a result of the last election: some lost and some didn't run. I want to mention their names and be sure they are recorded.

The following aldermen will be attending their last council meeting this evening: Dennis Haining, Duke O'Sullivan, Mary Kiss and Gerry Copps. I have to add that Gerry Copps was my ward mate for the five years I was on Hamilton council representing ward 4. I wish her particular personal happiness in the future; she deserves it. And Ron Corsini, Dave Wilson, Fred Eisenberger, Bob Charters, Terry Anderson.

Of course the biggest news of the municipal election was the election of Mayor Bob Wade as the mayor-elect of the new city of Hamilton. That means of course that this evening Mayor Bob Morrow is officiating at his last council meeting. Let me say publicly what I've been saying privately to people in this place who are interested and others who have asked what happened, because it was rather a shock. People knew it would be a tough election but I really don't think any of us, up to and including election night itself, thought that Bob Wade or John Munro or Fred Eisenberger would be able to pull it off, certainly not if you reflected on the previous poll results that had shown Bob Morrow ahead by close to 20 points or better.

Bob Wade obviously ran an excellent campaign, but I don't think it was one of those times when an individual burst through and everyone coalesced around them. That's not in any way to diminish Mayor-elect Wade's win but to point out the dynamics that I think were at play in our community. I also do not believe that it was an anti-Bob Morrow vote. Bob Morrow is the longest-serving mayor in the history of Hamilton. He's been there for 18-plus years. He is an outstanding individual who loves his community more than anyone possibly could.

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: I'm pleased that my colleague Ted McMeekin felt strongly enough to applaud. By saying that, I get it into the record, because I want it noted. That's a reflection of what I am saying: there really wasn't an anti-Bob Morrow vote. What I think happened in Hamilton, at the end of the day, was there was just so

much pro-change. People wanted change in the leadership as much as they wanted change in the structure and the governance and the fortune, if you will, of our community, and that showed itself. People coalesced around the candidate they thought had the best chance of creating that change and winning. I think most would agree that Bob Wade, of the three main challengers, was seen as the front-runner there. No one should really be surprised, then, if the pro-change attitude was out there, that it ended up coalescing around Mayor Wade.

1620

Let me say that I served with Bob Morrow. We will be given an opportunity early next year to show Bob our thanks and our gratitude. I know that as I reflect and think, "What could you possibly do to honour someone who has devoted their entire adult life, 18 years of it, as the mayor of one of the most important centres in the whole country?" I still haven't thought of anything that's quite big enough to do that, but I know there are a lot of people who are looking to that and I would just say to them that I don't think that we can overdo it. This is an opportunity for us as a community to be proud of ourselves, and we show that in the respect and honour that we bestow upon one of our own, our first citizen, and someone who was our first citizen and chief magistrate for 18 years. On a personal note, I want to wish Bob Morrow all the best in the future.

Let me also say I think it's incumbent on this government or the federal Liberals—if Mayor Morrow does not have other plans, there are a lot of opportunities for the public to serve in appointed positions. Oftentimes—not always—it's political payback, and this bag person and this long-time hack, if you will, is given a berth because it's important politics within the party. Let me just say to both governments that we have an opportunity as Canadians and as Ontarians to appoint someone with a wealth of experience who deserves an opportunity to continue. This is not a wealthy person. Not many but I guess some in politics are wealthy, and whether they have a job or not doesn't matter. Bob Morrow is very much a working person who is entitled, in my opinion, to continue the rest of his professional career in a dignified fashion, reflective of the service that he has given to the people. I can't think of anyone better to assume a lot of public positions that I can think of where he could use that experience and put that compassion and his intelligence to good use and continue to serve the people of Hamilton, Ontario, and perhaps the people of Canada. I want to publicly go on record and say that if either government acknowledges the importance of the sentiment I'm expressing, then certainly I, for one, will be quite prepared to publicly endorse and acknowledge as a positive step any kind of appointment that might come the way of Mayor Morrow, and I would go so far as to urge governments to please take a look at this. We have an opportunity to continue to benefit from the public service of one of this country's finest public servants.

Let me also take this opportunity to talk about a few things that are happening in Hamilton, not in any par-

ticular priority but just a few things that I want to get on the record while I have an opportunity.

We have a continuing strike going on at the CCAC that this government needs to recognize they have a role in. You cannot just continue to turn your back and say it's local negotiations. The CCACs exist because you created them. The workers, the case managers and the support staff, almost 200 of them, are on strike. I would say that, much like the VON strike, this is as much a strike against this government, the Harris government, as it is against the management at the CCAC. Again, much like what we went through with the elementary teachers in Hamilton, where the trustees supposedly are the ones who have the responsibility for negotiating, when they only have X number of dollars and the teachers present a justified list of demands in front of those trustees, it's a given formula for disaster. Much of the responsibility for that—in my opinion, all of it—has to be placed at the doorstep of this government.

It's so easy for you to say, "We're not going to get involved in these negotiations with the OPSEU workers and the elementary teachers because their direct employers are not the provincial government." Yet we all know that both the board and the CCAC are 100% funded by the province of Ontario. So if you don't give them enough money to operate the organization, and that includes negotiating collective agreements with the people who work there, then you have decided in either case that management will not be able to provide programs and materials and supports to the citizens of Ontario, whether it's Hamiltonians who are sick and need the help that can be provided by that staff or it's our kids. We're talking about the professional services that teachers bring to our children. In both those instances, this government is saying no.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: You need to step forward. Rather than heckling, why don't you do something positive about these issues? The fact of the matter is that you didn't give the school board enough money, the CCAC doesn't have enough money, and all your yapping in the world isn't going to change that one bit. What's going to change it is money, money that this government has decided is better being given to the very wealthy in this province and to the corporations in this province, to the tune of over \$4 billion.

A bill we voted on today, the Employment Standards Act, speaks to the issue of the minimum wage. Same thing. It's in your hands. It was in your hands to make sure the elementary teachers got a fair deal, it's in your hands to make sure the OPSEU workers at the CCAC get a fair deal and it's in your hands to decide whether the working poor—and that's who they are at \$6.85 an hour—any of those people, get a chance to share in the economic boom that you have decided so frequently to share with those who already have. But you've decided that's not important; that's not a priority. You stand back and, in the case of the CCAC and in the case of the elementary teachers and our children and the parents and the community, you've decided to go ahead and let our

communities divide, let us split into different camps, let us fight each other. As long as the teachers are fighting the trustees in Hamilton and as long as the OPSEU workers are fighting with the board of directors of the CCAC, then you can continue to pretend you don't have any responsibility in this at all.

I want to say that to the people in my community, the working poor, you have no justification for saying to them when you bring in your changes to the Employment Standards Act, "You're not going to get a piece of the pie. As a government, we've taken that pie and given it to our friends and you aren't part of that."

Further to that, at the CCAC—and let me say that I often find it a difficult position, especially as the labour critic but also as a Hamiltonian and an MPP representing my community, when those kinds of battles are going on. It wasn't that long ago that we went through a three-month strike, longer than three months, between the regional councillors and the drivers for the Hamilton Street Railway, our public transit in Hamilton. The difficulty for me is that, sitting here, I have a very clear first-hand appreciation of the fact that it's this government that makes and creates the scenarios where we have these divisive battles in our communities. It shouldn't be. We're in a surplus situation. There are billions of dollars. But rather than putting it in those necessary areas, you've given it to the very wealthy, those very people who give you the millions of dollars that let you run your election campaigns, and primarily to pay for advertising, which we all know is the modern secret weapon, if you will. Whoever buys the most advertising gets a huge advantage over anyone else.

But in the case of the CCAC, in the couple of minutes I have remaining I have to point out and I want to say to the board—and I'm going to have my staff send these Hansards to the board, because I'm extremely disappointed. I know many of those board members, and that's why I've been reluctant to stand here and say they've got a role in this, that they're culpable. I know that most of them are doing the very best they can with very limited resources, and that takes me back to this government's responsibility. But they as a board recently made a decision to hire scabs.

1630

I appreciate the pressure they're under. I understand all that's happening in the community and the backup that's happening in the hospitals. But that is no solution, especially in Hamilton, where we went through the Stelco strike in 1946, one of the few major historic labour struggles that took place in Ontario—Windsor being another—where the modern labour movement and the Rand formula were created. To this day there are families who still don't speak as a result of the divisiveness of that 1946 strike, where the management tried to break the union and the union ultimately prevailed. Local 1005 went on to become one of the pre-eminent union locals, not only among the Steelworkers but in all Canada.

That the board has chosen to hire scabs in our community, especially since it's a public entity, serving the public, to me is a slap in the face to our community—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the support of my colleague, Ted McMeekin, who obviously feels similarly about this happening in our community.

But let me say, so as not to leave the government off the hook: before you took power in 1995, that couldn't happen, because scabs were illegal in Ontario. There really was fairness and balance in Ontario, and nobody would have the lawful right to hire scabs. We all know that when you introduce scabs into a picket line, at that moment we get violence. Anybody who has studied labour history will realize that prior to that the incidence of violence is very rare.

When you start bringing in busloads of people behind painted windows, who are going inside to take the jobs of people who are on a lawful picket line and perhaps have been out there, as in the case of the OPSEU workers at the CCAC, for months, and they see Christmas coming, how many days will it take before the average person on that picket line snaps as the police are called in to do their job, which is to let that bus in?

All those things happen only because scabs were made legal again in Ontario by this government. You have a lot to account for in terms of all the violence and the length of strikes that are happening in our community. In the case of the CCAC, it wouldn't matter about the board and their decision; they wouldn't be allowed to.

So I say, "Shame on this government," for re-introducing scabs and violence and long strikes into Ontario, and to the board members at the CCAC I say, "You could have done better. You owe us as Hamiltonians more than a decision like this."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate? The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Mr Speaker, it is a privilege today to rise to debate from the government side this House calendar motion. I listened to the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot—that riding name is almost as long as my riding, as you just said, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

About this House calendar motion, I'm sure people have been listening and must be wondering, "What are these people talking about? Are they still talking about the labour bill, are they talking about the CCAC? What are they talking about?"

This is a debate on a House calendar motion. I've got mixed emotions on that, and I'll tell you why. On one hand we are recommending that we have an additional week of work, until December 21st. Many people in the opposition are having problems and reservations about working an extra week. They keep bringing up the 60-hour week, and today somebody was even saying 70. That's fearmongering. Let me be on the record as saying that. Because somebody lives two hours away and it takes them four hours to go back and forth, is that part of their working day? I don't know. Maybe that's where they have decided to stay. Maybe they should be closer. I don't know.

Naturally it is my pleasure to support the House calendar motion we are discussing. I know that a lot of times most members would rather be in their ridings doing productive work, talking to their constituents and attending to their needs, and I intend to do that after the House recesses. But in the meantime, there's a lot of work to be done. In fact there are some rumblings, and I'll be happy to put in my share, that perhaps the House is going to be sitting until late at night, which is hopefully until midnight and later if need be. As you have seen, I'm usually here to make sure—and I might even have a record. I think I've been present for every vote. That's why the people of Ontario have sent me, and I'm very pleased to take part in that democratic process.

Just a few minutes ago the member opposite was talking about unions and non-unions and where the workers are better. I had the pleasure during the summer months to travel to different parts of Ontario on Bill 69, the construction workers act. One of the things that came out during that time was that we asked some of the unionized people, "What happens when there's no unionized work?" They said, "Well, we just go and work non-union." So they get the best of both worlds. I guess they have the right to. I'm not saying they don't have the right to. They absolutely have the right to work any way they like, and I was quite encouraged to see that. People say, "Well, if you're union, you can only work union; if you're non-union, you can't be union," or vice versa, or decertified or certified. I think it's a democracy. I think people should have the right to decide whether they want to work in a union or not, how to certify and decertify and what their rights and responsibilities are.

Premier Harris and our government have established a very busy legislative schedule, as I have said. I think we're going to be sitting maybe until midnight. I'll be very happy to put in my share, maybe past midnight. When people talk about a 60-hour workweek, the fact of the matter is—members opposite are the same. All of them, including myself, put in many more hours than 60 hours a week, and we have families. I've got a family. I've got a couple of children. At the same time, when we work we want to work very hard and make sure the people of Ontario are getting their fair share. Let's face it, we need to stay longer and later to pass many bills which are before this House.

Today, the priorities of the Ontario government are reflective of those of the ordinary citizens of Ontario. Hard-working, law-abiding, taxpaying citizens in Ontario understand that the government, under the leadership of Premier Mike Harris, is working to make this province better than it was under the Liberal and NDP governments. You've heard the phrase, and I'm sure people at home have heard the phrase, 10 lost years.

Like this friend of mine from Newfoundland used to say, sometimes we surprise ourselves. I admit that the turnaround we've been able to bring about in Ontario since 1995 is amazing. A lot of people, even friends who belong to the PC Party, could not believe we would be able to turn Ontario around, because it is like a big ship

and it takes a while to steer that ship in the right direction. I'm very happy that we were able to do that. I want to thank not only the leadership of Premier Mike Harris but at the same time the good Ontarians who took that challenge, believed in us, tightened their belts, made the sacrifices, worked hard and who were there with us in this Common Sense Revolution.

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A lot of people—and I've said it before—did not believe us. They said, "It's voodoo economics. It doesn't make sense. The numbers don't add up," but I'm very happy that we were able to do that, and I'm very happy to be a newer member of that team. We're working to improve the lives of workers, students, parents and seniors throughout Ontario.

The people of my riding—and I'll take the liberty of saying that name again, because I'm very proud of my riding: Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. Sometimes I even use the abbreviation, BGMS, so feel free to use that if you need to.

Interjection.

Mr Gill: One of my colleagues asked if I have e-mail. I have two e-mails and a Web site, because we are moving into the modern age. Anybody who thinks they can keep doing things using archaic methods is wrong. My Web site—if they're recording it, that's fine, because they are busy. But if they want to look at the Web site, it's www.ramindergill.com—very simple. The e-mail is ramigill@hotmail.com, or there's another one.

The year 2000 has been very busy. It was my first full year, as I said, as an MPP since my election on June 3, 1999. That is the beauty of Canada, the beauty of Ontario, the democratic country and province we live in: every four or five years, people get another kick at the can and they decide. They did that in 1990, when they brought in an NDP government, and they did that on June 8, 1995, when they brought in the Conservative government. I'm not going to be partisan and show all the negatives and positives, but people see the improvements we've been able to make. As I said before, there have been problems. One problem is there's a shortage of labour. Everybody is gainfully employed and there's a shortage of labour, so many friends who are in business and industry are complaining, "We need more people." A lot of times there are problems in the federal immigration system, where families are not being united. Hopefully, with the new government coming in again federally, they can tinker again and make a difference.

Certainly in the Ministry of Labour, where I've had the privilege of being a parliamentary assistant, we've been very busy. I'm sure people at home have been watching that. Bill 69 aimed to fix the impediments to competition in the construction industry. Bill 139 is basically a law to bring sunshine to the obscure corners of labour relations. Bill 147 is the new Employment Standards Act for a new Ontario in a new century.

Looking back on those 18 months, let me say what a privilege it has been to be the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour. The ministry has been a busy place, with a very motivated and dedicated minister. I

know he was talked about in the Toronto Sun the other day. I won't go there, but I know there were some things that the Toronto Sun wrote about his appearance and enthusiasm and everything else. The minister is, as are many other people on this side of the House, exceptionally hard-working at the ministry and throughout the labour field. Contrary to what the opposition is claiming, Mr Stockwell is bringing common sense to labour relations in Ontario. The sunshine law, Bill 139, is pure common sense. It fulfills our commitment to workplace democracy, as laid out in the Blueprint, our 1999 election platform.

In May 1999, as I went door to door—and I'm still doing that, which is a good thing, and people are quite surprised that I go and knock on their doors. They say, "There's no election going on. Why are you here?" My answer is, "I just want to stay in touch with my constituents." They're quite pleased to do that, and they're happy to give a lot of good suggestions and accolades for the good work we're doing. They say, "Please pass it on to the Premier." I try and do that. The Premier is very busy, but every time I get a chance to see him, I do pass it on to him.

At that time, when I was knocking on doors, one of the things that came out very clearly—we know that not everybody was voting for us, and that's quite all right, because it is a democratic country we live in. But even people who were not voting for us did say that this is a government, this is a party, which is very credible. There are a lot of people who have come from different parts of the world and had lived with governments or systems which were maybe not so credible, maybe corrupt. They said, "Here's a government that, whether we like it or not, does what they said they were going to do. We may not have liked their policies in the Common Sense Revolution or the Blueprint, but they're there to spell out what they're going to do and then carry it out, and they're willing to stick their necks out in the four years or five years, whatever it happens to be, before going to the people." And the people decide whether what we've done is something good, something to their liking, whether it's good for Ontario, whether it's good for business, whether it's good for workers, unionized and non-unionized. Then they will have another kick at the can, like I said, whether it's in 2003, 2004, whenever it is, and they'll make their choice.

As I said before, the sunshine law is to allow hard-working union members to learn to know how much of their dues are spent on the salaries and benefits of top union officials. It protects and strengthens their right to make informed decisions as to whether they want to be represented by a union or the same union or whether they want to change.

I read letters from the people who watch these proceedings at home. Every now and then someone writes in to say that maybe we are too hard on the union bosses. They could mean the union bosses who mobilized our teachers against Bills 74 and 81 and are now doing everything in their power to paralyze the school system,

or they could mean the union bosses who spread confusion about 60-hour workweeks and assorted other nonsense like that. I don't think we're too hard on those union bosses. I think to have a union, if that is the workers' wish, is everyone's democratic right. To not have a union is also everyone's democratic right as well. I believe that if there's going to be a union, then there will be union bosses. That is the way the system works. However, I do not wish to see workers' rights trampled or abused at the hands of a union.

I support shining some light on these fat-cat union bosses. With rights to unionize and mobilize workers also come responsibilities. Our government is only going to spray sunshine all over those unions so that the membership will gain more information and power. Union members are now going to know what's being done with their pension funds.

A position on a union executive is a position of trust. If the unions deserve their tax-exempt status and their special legal protections, they must show transparently that they are worthy of their trust. They need to prove themselves not to me, not to the government, but to their members and the taxpayers who support their tax-exempt status. Unions are there to protect the workers, and sometimes we need to protect the workers from the unions. It's just common sense.

Interjections.

Mr Gill: I see the third party doesn't like to hear this, or even the opposition, but they should. Out-of-control union bosses, a few bad apples, could really cause chaos at an NDP convention where they cast guaranteed blocks of votes. I think, watching tensions in the labour movement now, watching the federal NDP squirm and wonder whether they should obey Buzz Hargrove and lose their autonomy or risk losing him and all those precious union dollars, they have a real dilemma. I feel sorry for them in a way, but as they are often so keen to say, "What you sow, so shall you reap."

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As the government we have worked to cut taxes, and that's no secret, to increase employment and reduce dependency. We are proud of our record. I know there is more work to be done. That is why we are debating change to employment standards. Whenever I'm feeling mellow and wondering if maybe I've been too hard on the OFL or the OSSTF or the CAW or some other pampered bunch, I think of the panic they are trying to spread about this perfectly reasonable and straightforward bill.

Good government and solid legislation don't make for very sexy, splashy headlines. Newspapers want scandals and they're tired of travelling to Ottawa or to the Prime Minister's riding to get them.

In Ontario we normally work a 40-hour workweek, and if we go over 44 hours we get overtime. That's normal and that won't change. What will change is the complex and outmoded system of requiring a minister's permit, a system that nobody understood, and so many people did not obey it.

We here in the Harris government take a very long, hard look at systems that don't work. We fix things. That's what good government is all about and that's what the Harris government is all about.

In my riding, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, good government means we're getting a new hospital. Peel Memorial Hospital on Queen Street in downtown Brampton used to be the most modern hospital in Ontario—in the 1930s. The new hospital, which will be on Bovaird Drive, right next to my office, will win that title for Brampton once again. This hopefully will be the largest hospital in the whole of Ontario. I'm very happy that I was able, in my short years as a member, to convince the district health council to locate that hospital in my riding. We're very excited and we're waiting for Minister Witmer's support so we can get started with the groundbreaking ceremony.

The people of BGMS deserve good government, and we're making sure we deliver that.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I guess the way to judge government, according to the last speaker, is to look at what has happened to hospitals. In the city of Toronto we've had an unfortunate experience with the Harris government, in that the Harris government created a so-called commission under, I can't recall—Sinclair was the person's name.

Interjection: Duncan Sinclair.

Mr Colle: Duncan Sinclair. He was the guru of health care. Mike Harris gave him the mantle to fix the health care system. This Mr Sinclair came to town and he was going to have all the solutions to health care in the province. No one in the Harris government now refers to this man Sinclair any more. They never refer to the hospital restructuring commission, because that commission was a total waste of taxpayers' dollars. It devastated the health care system in this province and is really the legacy of this government's attempt to do something with the health care system, and it was a total failure. As you can see, they are now spending more money and we have more problems in our hospitals and our health care system. We in fact know that in the city of Toronto this government has closed 10 hospitals. We have seen the closure and the bulldozing of Doctors Hospital, just down the street here, a fine community hospital bulldozed by this government, never to be seen again. We have the Queensway hospital—gone. We have Branson hospital, a fine hospital in North York—gone. Northwestern Hospital is now basically a television studio—a beautiful hospital on 35 acres, gone.

This government said they were going to fix the health care system; with Mr Sinclair they basically destroyed it. Now they're paying much more money, and we still have more problems than we ever had in health care in this province.

I should also mention that in my own riding of Eglinton-Lawrence in the city of Toronto, we face some of the realities that this government refuses to acknowledge: the reality that our own city is finding it impossible to deliver the services that they're used to giving to the over 2.5 million people of Toronto, because this gov-

ernment has downloaded so many essential services on to local property taxpayers. As you know, it has downloaded public transportation. It is trying to download all public housing at this point. It is downloading a variety of other services on to municipalities that can't afford to pay for these services.

The sad state of affairs is that the chief operating officer of the city of Toronto has warned the government this week that a city like Toronto could face bankruptcy because of the downloading of this government and the refusal of this government to acknowledge the fact that property taxpayers cannot pay for social services with their property taxes, yet this government continues to put more and more pressure on property taxes in Toronto with no help from the provincial government. The city of Toronto is the only city in North America, in Europe, anywhere in the world, that doesn't have upper-tier provincial or state funding for public transit, the only city in the whole world without that kind of funding. So public transit is on the backs of property taxpayers. That doesn't work. It's causing enormous hardships on the property taxpayers of the city.

I should also mention the area of housing. The city of Toronto has tens of thousands of people waiting to get basic housing. Most of these people are seniors who want a simple bachelor apartment, 400 or 500 square feet, where they can live their last decades. This government has shut the door completely on public housing, so seniors right now, who are vulnerable, who can't afford to pay market rates, are waiting on a list that is estimated to be anywhere from 50,000 to 70,000 people, the size of Kingston. If you imagine everybody in Kingston without a place to live and on a waiting list, that's what's happening in Toronto right now, up to 70,000 people unable to find reasonable accommodation so they can live in some kind of cleanliness and have some basic needs taken care of. This is the reality: people who cannot find even adequate housing, in a province that is awash in money.

This government has a huge surplus with all the PST it collects, with all the land transfer tax it collects; it collects \$3 billion a year in gasoline taxes. Yet it can't even provide for basic education, basic health care or basic housing. There is obviously a real dichotomy here between the reality of this government's treasury and the reality of the programs that are available in the city of Toronto.

If you look at these millions of dollars the government is taking in a day and you look at the state of our schools, our elementary and high schools have never undergone so many shortages in supplies, shortages in programs, the elimination of librarians, the elimination of music programs, the closing of swimming pools in schools because there are no funds to operate them. In Glenview school in my area, the after-school swimming program is being shut down because of no government money.

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You'll still see 30 to 35 kids in a classroom. Teachers, as you know, have been vilified and attacked on a regular

basis by this government. Parents are constantly being asked to raise money for school projects, and schools are closing on a regular basis. We've never had schools close. We are seeing schools and hospitals closed by this government in a time of plenty. As I said, when they are taking in \$3 billion a year in gasoline tax—what are they taking in from the gambling casinos they put up? Communities across Ontario now have casinos. They put one up there in Woodbine. There's Rama, there's Windsor, there's Niagara Falls. Millions are coming in today from those casinos. Why not put some of that money back into our schools and hospitals, into providing housing? We still cannot come to grips with the homeless problem we have here in Toronto. No matter how wealthy this government is, we have still not denied that problem of homelessness, although the city is trying its best.

This is a government that tends to blame others when problems occur. I know that this government, for instance, is now ready to blame the federal government at every turn. But you know, surprisingly, despite all the bashing of the federal government by the Alliance supporters across the way, the Reformers across the way, and some of the few Conservatives left, the people of Ontario resoundingly said no to the Harris policies of neo-conservatism, said no to the Stockwell Day dinosaur policies. They said they wanted a balanced approach, one that said yes, you need fiscal responsibility, but you need a social justice program that provides for our elderly, our sick and those who are vulnerable.

In this House I raised an issue about a recovering cancer patient in my riding who requires the drug Neupogen. The doctor has written repeatedly to the Minister of Health. I have written to the Minister of Health repeatedly. I've asked the Minister of Health in this House to allow for this drug to be paid for under OHIP, under the drug plan, and repeatedly the government says no, refuses to allow this family to have their right to have this drug paid for when this drug is readily available in almost every American state. The Americans are supposedly so far behind us in their health care system, yet a simple drug is costing this family over \$2,000 a month. The mother in this family is able to carry on with her chemotherapy and able to lead a fairly normal life with this drug, yet this government says no to giving her the drug. I can imagine this if we were back in the late 1980s or early 1990s, when there was a severe recession, but this is a government that's in a boom but won't even allow, as I said, that individual the Neupogen she needs for her cancer treatment. That is a typical case in point I'd like to show that gives people an idea of what they're facing.

Certainly there are things this government refuses to acknowledge. For instance, just north of Toronto we have an area that stretches from Cobourg all the way to Caledon. It's an area that provides basically the drinking water for Lake Ontario and for Lake Simcoe. It's the Oak Ridges moraine. There are over 60 rivers and streams—the Ganaraska, the Humber, the Don, the Rouge, the Credit, all these wonderful rivers—originating in the

ridge north of Toronto. The people of Richmond Hill, the people of Caledon, the people of Uxbridge are all saying, "Protect this vulnerable environmental area from unbridled development," and this government for two years has refused to stop development on the moraine. It does nothing but allow the development to continue without any role played by this government. If there isn't a role for government in protecting water, protecting natural areas, what good is this government if it won't take a strong stand to protect this vulnerable area that encompasses the source of our drinking water from Cobourg all the way to Caledon?

Yet the government steadfastly takes the side of the developers in saying we are not going to protect this environmentally sensitive area. Here's a government that has the power with a majority to do some good things and refuses to act unless it pleases all their special interests that they listen to primarily. They don't listen to the people of Richmond Hill, the people of Oak Ridges. They don't listen to the people of Cobourg. All they do is listen to the special interests who are saying, "Develop those lands because there is quick profit to be made." What about the value of our clean water for the next 20, 30, 40 or 50 years, and the wildlife that stretches and uses the greenspaces? What about birds? What about the trees in the forest that have to be protected? This government is doing nothing but allowing unbridled development to take place without any role by this government, and that is appalling.

I should mention another thing that this government tends to stand on the sidelines for. There is a horde of door-to-door salesmen going across this province hustling so-called energy, electricity or natural gas. These people prey especially on seniors. They even go to seniors and give them cheques that say, "Here's \$50, Mr John Smith," a cheque made out to Mr John Smith on Fairlawn Avenue for \$50. Mr John Smith doesn't look carefully, but on the back is the fine print. These are these gas brokers that say, "We'll sell you this natural gas at a cheaper price for five years or we'll sell you electricity at a cheaper price for five years." They give them this cheque for \$50 and say, "Here is the beginning." But on the back of the cheque, in the fine print it says, "If you cash this cheque, you are locked into this company's gas provision plans for the next 10 years." That is misleading. That borders on fraudulent. This government tolerates that. It tolerates these door-to-door hustlers. They do it by phone, they do it by mail. I don't care if you're a Bay Street lawyer, you can't figure out the pros and cons of these new long-term contracts in the provision of electricity or the provision of natural gas. It is impossible for the average citizen to know what is happening with those contractors that are hustling people door-to-door. But they're doing it rampantly and they're taking advantage of people. This government is silently complicit with those door-to-door hustlers by not stopping them.

The other thing that's happening is there is an exorbitant increase in the price of home heating natural gas. We are going to see people's bills increase by over \$500

probably this winter because of what's happening in the marketplace. I think this government owes it to seniors, especially, on low fixed incomes or people that are on very limited incomes to offer some kind of buffer protection for them. I know the federal government has given them a rebate for home heating costs. I think this government that's awash in billions of dollars in revenue it collects could at least put some money back into helping seniors and people on low, marginal incomes survive this winter as heating fuel, the cost of natural gas is going to make it very, very difficult on people.

Those are some of the suggestions we've been making on this side of the House. This government should take a more proactive role in not only looking after big money special interests, because they can take care of themselves. They can afford the lobbyists. If you ever look on the Web site, there is a government lobbyists' Web site. It goes on for pages and pages. All these Bay Street lawyers are coming in to see cabinet ministers on a daily basis. Most people can't afford those lobbyists. Those people who can't afford the lobbyists have a hard time reaching this government. It's like the people in my riding who have now received their new property tax assessment notices that show increases of 50%, 60%, 70% or 80%. There is no protection by this government for those people. All it tells people that are going to see these increases is that the municipality will be allowed to let you defer your taxes—in essence, put a lien or a reverse mortgage on your property. That is not acceptable. People don't want to put a mortgage on their property after they've spent a lifetime paying off their mortgage. This government has the money to help the people in those properties that are seeing fantastic property tax increases. It shouldn't just be left to the municipality. The municipalities are cash-strapped, because all they rely on is the property tax, and with the downloading this government has perpetrated on municipalities they have very little wiggle room.

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This government should be helping people who are going to be victimized by the fluctuating market value assessment which they thrust upon the people of Ontario and the people of Toronto. If you've got the system in place, at least put in some defences to protect people who are hurt by it. They can afford to do it.

There's another thing. Mr Speaker, I don't know if it's like this up in Espanola and beautiful Manitoulin Island, but I'm sure this happens up there too. In Toronto, when people buy a piece of property and they love the neighbourhood, they love the setting—it's not as beautiful as Manitoulin Island, especially near the Cup and Saucer, which is a beautiful part of this province that more people should visit—they want to fix it up. So they go to Home Depot or Revi or one of those stores, and they buy lumber, they buy drywall, they buy cement, and they fix up their homes. They add on a little extended kitchen. They put a back room on. They put a new family room on. They dig out basements. I've seen them do it with their own hands, pick and shovel. They improve the value of that property. They make that property better,

because they took an old property in north Toronto that's maybe 80 years old and they renovated it.

Do you know what this government does to that person who has gone to Home Depot, gone to Revi, got the lumber, got the wheelbarrow, worked in the house for six months, built that family room on the back? Do you know what they do? They send an assessor around to basically make people pay more for the home improvement. Not only do you pay the PST when you buy your lumber, your drywall, your wheelbarrow at Home Depot, now you've got to pay this provincial government that's awash in billions of dollars through all the billions they collect in gas tax, the billions they collect in land transfer tax.

They collect billions, yet there's poor Mrs Pasquale and her husband who dug out a basement to put on a new room at the back and paid for all this equipment they bought at Home Depot—I don't want to just push Home Depot—or Sam's Hardware down the street. This government has the gall—after collecting PST, collecting \$3 billion in gas tax—to come back and penalize Mr and Mrs Pasquale with a higher assessment penalty, because as soon they get that building permit with the municipality, that building permit goes to the assessment office, and the assessment office knocks on Mr Pasquale's door and says, "Mr Pasquale, good work. Here's that bigger tax bill." That's what this government does. It penalizes people for initiative. It penalizes people for hard work and doesn't recognize the fact that you should be thanking people for fixing up their homes, not penalizing them.

Interjection.

Mr Colle: I know the member from Niagara Falls may not recognize that this happens in Toronto, but we have fixed up homes that are 70, 80, 100 years old. We're proud of our homes.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): It's happening everywhere.

Mr Colle: It's happening in Kingston all over the place, beautiful Kingston there. This government penalizes people for repairing, renovating, revitalizing neighbourhoods. It's a total disgrace that this government penalized these good people.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm going to be dividing my time with the member for Niagara Falls.

I'm certainly pleased to speak to this House calendar motion. Certainly a lot has been done in this session with respect to the agenda of this government. As you know, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care introduced legislation, the Personal Health Information Privacy Act. This legislation is necessary to protect the privacy and confidentiality of people's health information. Information about a person's health is a very sensitive issue, and by putting rules in place that tell people how their personal health information will be protected, we can assure them that their individual private information is protected.

The protection of personal health information has been in demand for a number of years, and our government is the first to respond to this demand.

The efforts by the Minister of Health support our government's Blueprint commitment to strengthen the rights of all Ontarians to access complete health information, including records and test results, but also to ensure their privacy concerning their personal health and personal health records. This legislation is critical because it will ensure that effective protections are in place when health information needs to be shared to provide better patient care. It is also critical because it will strengthen the confidentiality and security of health information. So I strongly support the health minister in her endeavour to pass this legislation, and I strongly believe she deserves to be commended for working hard to protect the confidential health information of every Ontarian.

Another initiative in this session had to do with school safety. On December 8, Education Minister Janet Ecker and Solicitor General David Tsubouchi announced a new, province-wide model police-school board protocol outlining how schools must work with police to prevent and respond to serious incidents. Under the model protocol, schools must involve police in incidents involving serious assaults where medical attention is required, sexual assaults, robbery, criminal harassment, weapons, drug offences and other serious offences. It provides a framework for school boards and local police to work together in successfully preventing and responding to school-related crime and violence.

The model protocol also sets out consistent standards so that when school incidents do occur, the response respects the rights of victims, witnesses and the alleged offenders. This new province-wide model police-school board protocol is one of a series of measures under the Safe Schools Act, 2000, that fulfil a key government commitment to increase respect, responsibility and civility in Ontario's schools. I strongly support this initiative by Minister Ecker and Minister Tsubouchi, because the safety of our children is of utmost importance. I commend them for working together in protecting the young individuals who will in time be the future leaders of this province.

I want to comment on a couple of local initiatives, because certainly my riding has benefited significantly from measures that have been taken by this government. In terms of health care funding, the Royal Victoria Hospital, which is in effect a regional hospital serving almost all of Simcoe county and also Muskoka, has benefited from increased funding. I was very pleased to present to the hospital on three separate occasions monetary amounts in the areas of \$8 million and \$3 million and, just last Friday, additional funding of \$300,000. All this money goes toward improving our orthopaedic surgery, toward dealing with prenatal services and also toward the general operation of the hospital, and it's very well received.

Also on the local level, on November 22 the mental health services in Simcoe county received a \$1.3-million

boost from our government. Of that money, \$1.2 million will go toward programs to prevent homelessness among people with serious mental illnesses. The Barrie branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association currently provides assistance and support for about 100 individuals. The funding gives non-profit organizations such as the Canadian Mental Health Association the flexibility to develop innovative projects to help provide housing and related mental health services based on regional needs. There have been other areas the government has moved into that are very significant.

1720

Last Thursday, I was very pleased to receive unanimous approval from the Legislature for my resolution dealing with prostate cancer, to have the ministry review OHIP funding for asymptomatic males. This is a very serious issue for males, because prostate cancer is the second most-frequent cause of cancer-related deaths among the male population.

A part of that resolution that was also very significant is funding by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care of a prostate cancer awareness program. At this time, we have materials with respect to what the government will fund with respect to prostate cancer, which go out to physicians who share those with their patients. But that's not enough. We have to do more to make sure the male population is aware that testing and early detection are necessary, and that PSA testing can be used, and obviously is used, when males have symptoms with respect to prostate cancer.

Another part of that resolution dealt with breast cancer. Every year I sponsor two pancake breakfasts in support of breast cancer fundraising and research. They both occur in June, one in Barrie, where the funds go to the Royal Victoria Hospital, and one in Bradford-West Gwillimbury, where the funds go to the Southlake Regional Health Centre.

In the United States they have a semi-annual commemorative postal stamp to raise funds for breast cancer, a very serious form of cancer for women between the ages of 36 and 54. I understand that in the last two years they have raised in excess of \$15 million from that stamp. I have written to every Premier and Minister of Health across this country, including the territories, and I have received support from every province and territory with respect to this initiative. I have also been in consultation with the Breast Cancer Foundation of this province, which wants to join me and partner in trying to convince Canada Post, which is a federal agency, to issue a stamp to raise funds for breast cancer. Obviously it would bring more awareness, but it's also designed to raise funds for research with respect to breast cancer.

There was only one occasion in this country when the Canadian postage stamp advisory committee issued a stamp to raise funds, not just for awareness but also for research, and that was with respect to literacy. So a precedent has been set. Certainly that was a worthy cause, but this is also a worthy cause. It's not something I am going to let die. The Canadian postage stamp ad-

visory committee has to be pushed. I'm certainly looking for support from the other side, because obviously the federal government has a role to play in this. I think it's a worthy initiative that has already received the support of this House—the province of Ontario—and has received support from every other province and territory in this country. I am very pleased to have been a part of this session with respect to that resolution.

I'm now going to give my time to the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure to rise and join the debate to talk about a few issues that have been discussed during the afternoon and to talk about the motion before us to extend the sitting of the Legislature until December 21, which is next Thursday. I know we've already had some motions to sit longer hours. It has become the habit of this government to sit longer hours. We used to finish the legislative day at 6 o'clock. We have changed that, and more often than not this Legislature sits till 9:30 at night. The reason for it, of course, is to get more debate and more input on all the bills that come before the Legislature.

I was on my feet on Thursday, when we were discussing a bill, talking about the record this government set between 1995 and 1999 with time we sat in the Legislative Assembly debating bills and the time we sat in public hearings on bills. From 1995 to 1999 the government set records not only as a government sitting more hours than any other government in the history of this province, in both this chamber debating bills and in public committees debating bills, but I think we set a record for any Legislature across the entire country, including the federal government.

We continue to have that work ethic, and that's what this bill is about. We want to extend the sittings for another week to next Thursday. We will be sitting not only until 9:30 tonight but later on next week I believe we'll be sitting until midnight. It's something we've already worked on. So we do have that work ethic.

One of the members from the opposition party, Mr Colle from Eglinton-Lawrence, went on about all these wonderful things in his chat a while ago. By the way, it will be interesting to look back and add up his promises, because in his speech he talked about all these wonderful things the government should do with all this money we have coming in. I think it's vitally important that you can't just pick and choose and say you're going to fund everything and not put a price tag on it and willy-nilly start throwing money, as is the Liberal way. When they governed, that's how they did govern. He picked on every topic. It sounded to me like if anybody had been into his office recently and needed money for a certain purpose, yes, he wanted to fund that purpose.

Yes, things are much better in Ontario, as everyone knows. It's no secret: 800,000 jobs have been created over the past five years since we've been in office and 600,000 fewer people are now dependent on welfare. As a result of that, even though we've reduced taxes dramatically since we've been in office, more money is

indeed flowing into provincial revenues. "Where is it all going?" he asked. Casino monies, for instance, from Windsor, and Niagara Falls, my riding, should go into health care. If he just looked at the most recent Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review provided by the finance minister recently, he would know that all that extra money does indeed actually flow into health care. So we've gone from \$17.4 billion annually to over \$22 billion annually. We had to replace the money the federal government ripped out of the health system, and on top of that we've added a lot more money.

Yes indeed, because of the tax cuts the economy has grown dramatically. More revenues are coming in. There are more revenues coming in through the casinos, including in my riding, and that money is going into health care. We used to run annual \$11-billion deficits and now we're running surpluses and we're balancing budgets.

Some of the members opposite are complaining about casinos, but I was very proud on Friday to announce that indeed the government had recently wrapped up deals with the municipality on some revenue sharing and to move forward on permanent casino development in Niagara Falls. That's going to be a huge investment in my riding. I really can't give a final figure of the cost of the development, but it will be probably \$700 million, in that area. It's a dramatic investment in the casino and the hotel, and there's a convention facility that will be there. There's a 1,200-seat theatre for entertainment. There's a 15,000-seat amphitheatre for concerts and perhaps boxing matches in the future. There's a large, \$22.5-million contribution to purchase a rail line that has always run through the tourist core in Niagara Falls and has been a great interruption and problem for our tourist area. We're going to contribute to purchasing that property.

I was very proud to be able to make that announcement, and that whole development has thus far been a wonderful boom for our economy. Our unemployment rate in 1993 was about 15.3%. It's down to under 6% right now in the Niagara region. Skyscrapers abound and hotels are going up—restaurants and all kinds of new development—and we continue to move forward with that. On Friday I actually gave a cheque to the municipality for \$216,000. It's a monthly cheque they'll get forevermore now for hosting a casino. On top of that they're going to get millions of dollars, as will the regional government, in revenues, in property taxes on that whole development. There will be millions of dollars in development charges flowing to the community. There will be about 5,000 direct jobs there.

That has indeed been a wonderful economic development initiative that this government has taken on in Niagara Falls. There is a return from that casino, not just from the casino revenues. As people who work there have good full-time jobs and then build homes, there's a lot of revenue, there's a lot of economic development that occurs, and that revenue flows into the government coffers.

Where is it all going? It's all going to health care. Not only is some of that money coming into government

revenues and going back out into health care, but a lot of money is flowing into the Trillium Foundation. This used to be a \$10-million-a-year foundation that gave money out to charities. It has now grown to \$100 million a year. That money is going out to charities in my riding, in the member from Niagara Centre's riding and in the riding of the member from St Catharines. It goes to all the deserving charities that apply to committees throughout the province, that decide on where that money will get divvied up in Ontario. So all of that money is indeed going to health care and to charitable organizations.

I would think that the member opposite who complained about a laundry list of things would actually vote in favour of this motion. If he wants to do some of the things he said in his speech he wanted to do, then he should be voting in favour of this motion to extend this sitting for another week. I look for him in about 20 minutes' time or so to stand up and actually support this motion that we will extend the sitting.

At this point in time I ask that the question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker: I will take just a minute to consider that.

Mr Maves has moved that the question now be put. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1733 to 1803.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Maves has moved that the question now be put.

All those in favour will rise one at a time until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted

Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael D.
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Snobelen, John

Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder

Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan

Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob

The Deputy Speaker: All opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.

Crozier, Bruce
Dombrowsky, Leona
Gerretsen, John
Hoy, Pat
Kormos, Peter
Levac, David
McLeod, Lyn

McMeekin, Ted
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 51; the nays are 20.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Baird has moved government order number 10. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I've received a letter from the chief government whip deferring the vote until tomorrow during deferred votes.

It being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1806.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 12 December 2000

Mardi 12 décembre 2000



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 12 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 12 décembre 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BALANCED BUDGETS FOR BRIGHTER FUTURES ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR DES BUDGETS ÉQUILIBRÉS POUR UN AVENIR MEILLEUR

Mr Young, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act to implement the 2000 Budget to establish a made-in-Ontario tax system and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 2000 en vue de créer un régime fiscal propre à l'Ontario et à modifier diverses lois.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Since this is going to be an important debate this evening, do we have a quorum?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Is a quorum present?

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Willowdale.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): Mr Speaker, with your permission this evening, I will be sharing my time with a number of members of this assembly, including the member from Scarborough East, the member from Simcoe North and the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

It is indeed a pleasure this evening to have an opportunity to speak to this bill, An Act to implement the 2000 Budget to establish a made-in-Ontario tax system and to amend various Acts. It is the second stage, the culmination, of what was an historic budget for this province which was introduced in this very assembly in May of this year by the Honourable Ernie Eves, the Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier. You will undoubtedly recall that he stood in this Legislature and announced that for the first time in my lifetime, and certainly in a considerable period of time, we had a province that was the envy of the nation in terms of economic development and

fiscal growth. We had a province that was working better than not only any other province in this country, but better than the United States and, in fact, had a net GDP growth rate that was significantly higher than any other G7 country.

That in and of itself would have been reason to celebrate, but Minister Eves was also in a position to proclaim to the hard-working men and women of this province that we had balanced the budget of this province and that we had not only done it for this year, but we had done it for the previous year. We realized that after having had an opportunity to consider just how great the economic growth was for the preceding year. To be able to establish and to announce to the people of this province that we had balanced the budget for two consecutive years—I say “we”; in fact, I should say the people of Ontario did that. It was with great pride that the minister stood there and made that announcement and then, of course, there was legislation introduced at that time. This is the second stage of that, which will implement some remaining portions of the budget announcement. We'll talk about that this evening at some length.

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It's indeed a privilege to be able to talk about the accomplishments. It's particularly important to stress, though, just how far we have come. Because while it is true that even if Ontario had experienced sustained economic growth over the last 10, 15, 20 years, this would be a good-news announcement, this would be a budget that was worth reading, this would be a budget that was worth celebrating, because there are in excess of 830,000 more people working than there were five-plus years ago, because there are more than half a million less people collecting welfare, half a million people who now understand the dignity of a job, have that privilege, who have been able to go home and utter those magic words, “I got the job”; because our tax rate has continued to decline year after year after year and because the growth in this province has continued to increase year after year after year since Mike Harris took office.

That would be reason enough to celebrate. But when one considers just how far we have come, given where we started from, when one considers that in 1995 we took office and the people of this province talked at some considerable length about the fact that we were on the verge of bankruptcy—now whether that was real or whether that was simply a perception, a widely held perception, is really of no import. What was important is that the people of this province had lost confidence, had lost faith. There was no longer the confidence, the secur-

ity to go out and buy that new automobile, to renovate the house, to make important changes in one's life, because there was a concern that we as a province collectively, and individuals within that province, simply didn't have the financial wherewithal, the financial security to afford that over any length of time.

As evidence of that, and certainly one of the signs that was most disconcerting to the Conservative Party as we ran in the 1995 election, and undoubtedly was very upsetting to the people of this province, was the fact that the predecessor government, the NDP government before us, had tabled a budget that anticipated a deficit for the coming year of in excess of \$11 billion.

So when one considers that over five and a half short years we have managed to balance the budget two consecutive years, we are now in the process of paying down the debt, we have all those hundreds of thousands of people working, fewer people receiving social assistance, there is reason to celebrate—so much so that even those naysayers, those who thought we were on the wrong course, including some very well-respected economists at the time, and certainly the members opposite, the NDP and the Liberals, who said, "Cutting taxes is not the way to go. Cutting taxes won't earn you more revenue as a province. Cutting taxes won't create more jobs," with the greatest respect, were wrong. What has happened over the last five and half years has proven them to be wrong.

What we have now is very clear evidence that tax cuts do create jobs and play a big part in fuelling the economy, fuelling the growth of this province. I do want to stop to acknowledge, as undoubtedly will my friends who follow me, that we have benefited in this province by the boom that has occurred in the US. There's absolutely no doubt about that. But let's remember what I said a moment ago, what Minister Eves has said repeatedly in this Legislature; let's remember that the growth rate within this province is one that is far greater than the other provinces, that is greater than the United States, that is greater than the G7 countries. So we're doing something more to stimulate the economy than simply riding along on the coattails of our American neighbours. But I do acknowledge that is a factor.

Having said that, if that was the only factor, then we would be following them, and we're not. We're leading the way, so much so that even one of our greatest critics, an individual who on every possible occasion has gone out of his way to suggest that we were proceeding down the wrong road, that we were heading in the wrong direction—whose name I'll reveal to you in just a moment—recently was quoted in a National Post article as saying the following: "Our tax system is now very competitive with the Americans. If you look at Ontario, the income tax in Ontario, provincial and federal together, is competitive with New York, and Michigan, California, and the state of Washington. Corporate tax, too. But the payroll tax in Canada is much lower than in the U.S." That is what this individual said about Mike Harris's Ontario. The name of the individual—

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):
Who was that? Mike Harris?

Mr Young: No, it wasn't Mike Harris. He was talking about Mike Harris. The name of the individual who had such great admiration for what we have done in this province is Jean Chrétien. The Prime Minister of this country was recently quoted as acknowledging just how competitive this province has become. The Prime Minister has acknowledged that Ontario, with its tax-cutting ways—less income tax, less corporate tax, less payroll tax—is leading the way to the recovery of this country. Whether or not one describes the Prime Minister as a johnny-come-lately, the reality is that we're glad that he too acknowledges—although later, not sooner—that tax cuts are and were necessary.

So we have a budget bill that we're debating this evening that continues many of the traditions that were commenced when the Mike Harris government took office in 1995. I'm very proud to be here to discuss that because there is a great deal more to do. There should be no doubt that there is more to do. One of the ways we're going to be able to do more is to establish in this province a made-in-Ontario, made-for-Ontario tax system. What this legislation encompasses is a made-for-Ontario personal income tax system that will allow the people of this province to calculate the provincial income tax they owe based upon their total income, not based upon the federal taxes they're paying.

It's important to emphasize that is what this provision will do and it's important to emphasize what it will not do. We do not believe that this will require the average Ontarian to fill out an additional tax form. If we did, we would be reluctant to proceed down this road. The reality is that it may well change a couple of the lines on your current tax form, but it's unlikely to significantly increase or, in reality, increase at all the load of an Ontario taxpayer. What it will do by having a made-in-Ontario tax system is make it very clear, very transparent to those in this province what amount they are paying to the provincial government and what amount they are paying to the federal government. It will make it very clear to them. It will also allow our province to establish tax policies that will meet the needs of the people of this province.

Because we live in a diverse country, and as proud as we are to be Canadians, we acknowledge that there are differences. There are different challenges on the east coast than there are on the west coast. The lobster industry is of less import in the province of Ontario than it is in Newfoundland. Provisions and incentives dealing with the growing of wheat are less important in Ontario than they would be in Saskatchewan. That is why Ontario, along with most of the other provinces in this country, is moving toward having a tax system that will recognize the unique nature of each province.

One of the things we will be able to do in that regard is to put forward employee benefit options that will allow for incentives, particularly in areas such as media and film. A mining tax exemption which is contemplated in

this legislation will support the mining industry in this province, often in remote areas, by providing a 10-year or \$10-million mining tax exemption. It will provide investors in research-intensive, labour-sponsored investment funds with an enhanced tax credit, in many instances, of 20% instead of 15%. This will undoubtedly serve to continue to stimulate, to stir, to promote those sectors that have proven to be so successful and that are so sought after in other parts of the world.

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We are also including in this legislation provisions that will deal with the new education technology tax incentive to encourage businesses to support Ontario's universities and community colleges in a very substantial way by acquiring new equipment and technology.

As well, we are extending the right to incorporate to professionals regulated under public acts, while leaving in place—and I stress this—the personal professional liability that has always existed. So the fact that a lawyer might have the right to incorporate will not in any way, will not in any shape, will not in any form affect one's ability to sue and to recover damages from a lawyer if he or she is negligent or somehow or other has failed that client in a manner that would call for compensation to be ordered. It will provide those professionals with some of the benefits of incorporation that have existed in other provinces and that exist for other professions. The same right would be extended to certified general accountants, who would be governed by the same act.

So we have legislation that we believe will continue to spur on the economy of this province, and I'm very pleased that we have an opportunity to discuss it this evening.

One provision that was discussed when we last dealt with the issue of the budget in this province in May of this year was the Ontario research employee stock option credit. This is a credit that would allow employees of eligible research and development companies in this province a personal income tax credit for the first \$100,000 of taxable employee benefits and capital gains each year arising from designated stock options. You will recall that I mentioned earlier how important it is that we maintain and provide a basis for growth for high-tech companies that are so important in the 21st century, that are so sought after throughout the world. This is an incentive that I anticipate will have just that effect. Eligible corporations are those that perform research and development in Ontario and spend, on a corporate group basis, at least \$25 million or 10% of their group revenue in eligible research and development expenditures. It's important to emphasize that both small and large companies will benefit from this provision and will qualify.

In our legislation, we also deal with the Employer Health Tax Act. We're proposing to help high-tech firms keep top employees by excluding from the employer health tax base the stock option benefits for employees of eligible research-and-development-intensive companies. We believe this measure, if passed by this Legislature, would help these companies attract the best and the

brightest minds to this province and would allow them to keep those individuals when they come to the province.

Another initiative dealt with in this legislation is the research-oriented investment funds. This, as I indicated earlier, will be an enhancement and improvement of the very successful labour-sponsored investment funds that have existed in this province for a number of years and which many hard-working Ontarians choose to invest in as part of their RRSP contributions.

With the educational technology tax incentive, we propose to make some changes to encourage businesses to support Ontario's universities and community colleges. As I indicated before, we believe this will have a very profound effect. It's in addition to tax deductions and credits that are currently available for donations and price discounts.

I talked earlier about the remote mines provisions, because it is important not to forget those parts of the province that haven't experienced the same level of economic success that most of the province has. There are many parts of this province that continue to need some economic stimulation, and we are hopeful that this will be one further source of that.

This bill, if passed, would allow more Ontario small businesses to use the short-form corporate tax return. The requirement to file a corporations tax return is burdensome, particularly so for a small business in this province. We've heard from small business representatives about this concern and we have responded. A large part of the general return is frankly irrelevant for small corporations, especially those exempt from capital tax. So we have a simplified tax return that will be available, and that is in keeping with the general philosophical approach this government has of simplifying and cutting red tape. The simplified tax return would reduce the red tape for small businesses and ease the burden on those small companies. Of course, it is the small and medium-sized corporations that create the most jobs in this province.

This bill is one that, when passed, will undoubtedly serve to continue the growth that we have experienced in this province. But I want to come back to where I started. I want to come back to the fact that we in this government have attempted to lay the groundwork for the economic recovery of this province, but it is the men and women of this province who each and every morning get up and go out and do their job, and do it well and take pride in their job. They are the ones who deserve the credit; they deserve the accolades and they deserve the applause, because it is each of those individuals who have helped to turn around the fortunes of this province. Yes, it is true, and I sincerely believe that many of the initiatives that we have brought forward over the last number of years have helped, have created a fertile climate for that growth, but I think it's important to remember that it's individuals and their hard work, it's entrepreneurs large and small, who are prepared to take risks, often mortgaging their homes and risking their futures in order to continue the growth in this economy.

I anticipate that when the Liberals and the NDP have an opportunity to speak, we will hear a great deal about

other reasons they will suggest exist for the growth and economic turnaround in this province. I want to say this: I think we all, as parliamentarians in this great province, should stop and acknowledge that it is possible for the people of Ontario to be responsible for this success. We need not look over our southern border, as we so often do when we examine positive developments. We need not look over our southern border in order to find an explanation for the growth and the success we've experienced in this province exclusively. I acknowledge to you that there has been a positive effect from the growth there, but for the reasons I stated earlier, that's not the only factor that has stimulated the economy in this province.

So let's stop. Let's take pride in what we have done in this province—and I say “we” collectively. I'm not talking about just within this Legislature. Let's take pride in what we have done and let's look ahead with the same level of optimism that has been experienced over the last two or three years within this province since the reforms of the Mike Harris government have really taken effect. Let's look ahead with the same level of optimism for a brighter future for ourselves, for our children and for our grandchildren.

I think some of my colleagues would like to address this very important piece of legislation as well.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join and follow the member from Willowdale, who is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance. The short title of the bill is the Balanced Budgets for Brighter Futures Act, 2000. The bill provides the legislative framework for a made-for-Ontario personal income tax system, a system that will be independent of the federal government. This system is being developed to ensure that the province has the ability to develop taxation policies that meet the needs of our taxpayers.

We are fulfilling our commitment to introduce a provincial income tax system based on income so that people can keep more of their hard-earned money. Ontario taxpayers would benefit from more cuts to personal income tax this year and a fairer made-for-Ontario personal income tax system for the tax year 2001.

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The legislation proposes to restore full indexation of Ontario's personal income tax system, thereby eliminating bracket creep and ensuring that no Ontario taxpayer pays more than their fair share because their income increases to keep up with inflation.

Research employees whose compensation packages include stock options would benefit from the Ontario employee research stock option credit. This tax credit would effectively exempt from Ontario personal income tax the first \$100,000 of taxable employee benefit and capital gains each year arising from designated stock options.

The bill also proposes excluding from the employer health tax base the stock option benefits of employees of eligible research-and-development-intensive companies. The Balanced Budgets for Brighter Futures Act, 2000,

would benefit a broad range of taxpayers at all income levels, all business sectors and all parts of the province.

Other tax-cutting measures proposed in the bill include: providing investors in research-intensive labour-sponsored investment funds with an enhanced tax credit of 20%, up from the current 15%; supporting mining in remote areas by providing a 10-year or \$10-million mining tax exemption for eligible remote mines; enhancing corporate tax incentives that support the book publishing, digital media and film and television production industries; providing the new educational technology tax incentive to encourage businesses to support Ontario's universities and community colleges in acquiring new equipment and technology; and, finally, extending the right to incorporate two professionals regulated under public acts while maintaining personal professional liability to protect the public interest. This same right is being extended to certified general accountants who are governed by a private statute.

Since 1995, 830,000 jobs have been created in Ontario. There can be no doubt that by allowing Ontarians to keep more of their hard-earned money, they have been spending more and investing more. The evidence is clear: tax cuts do create jobs and play a big part in fuelling economic growth in every region of this province.

I want to comment on a couple of areas of the legislation before I give up my time to the member for Simcoe North. The made-for-Ontario tax system: in the 2000 budget, we announced that we would fully implement a made-for-Ontario tax system for the 2001 year. Under this system, Ontario would establish its own income tax rates and brackets and a uniquely Ontario approach to reductions in income tax through credits, exemptions and deductions.

It is our view that the flexibility provided by the made-for-Ontario income tax system is desirable. We also think that it can be achieved within a single tax administration system. Our tax system would enable the province to gear tax policies to the specific needs of Ontario taxpayers. For example, as announced in the fall 2000 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, we announced our intention to use this new flexibility to enhance Ontario's non-refundable tax credits for students, people with disabilities and their caregivers in the year 2001.

Another example is the Ontario research employee stock option credit, an initiative that is designed to improve Ontario's competitiveness as a place for researchers to locate and conduct their work.

Also, the educational technology tax incentive: to encourage businesses to support Ontario's universities and community colleges in acquiring new teaching equipment and learning technology, the education technology tax incentive has been proposed. Under the new incentive program, corporations get a tax deduction and unincorporated businesses get a tax credit on donations and price discounts to Ontario universities and colleges in respect of new teaching equipment and learning technologies. This incentive is in addition to tax deductions or credits currently available for donations and price discounts.

One other area that I want to comment on is the short-form corporations tax return. This bill would allow more Ontario small businesses to use the short-form corporations tax return. The requirement to file a corporations tax return is burdensome for small businesses. A large part of the general return is irrelevant for small corporations, especially those exempt from capital tax. Having a simplified tax return would reduce the red tape for small business and ease this burden.

The bill also deals with professional incorporation, which I commented on earlier. Many other provinces already allow professionals to incorporate using professional corporations. At the moment, Ontario allows only certain regulated professionals, such as architects and professional engineers, to incorporate their practices. Other self-employed professionals, including physicians, dentists, lawyers and accountants, told this government during recent consultations that they too would like the option of choosing whether or not to incorporate. From the comments of the governing bodies and professional associations representing these groups, the opportunity is now here to propose to extend the right to incorporate to professionals regulated under public statute, as well as certified general accountants, who are governed by a private statute. The legislation would maintain personal professional liability while protecting the public interest.

In this area, the amendment could provide significant tax benefits to valuable medical professionals such as nurses, specialist doctors, physiotherapists, midwives, speech pathologists, radiation therapists, dentists and hygienists, many of whom are in strong demand across the province and are being lured away from Ontario by incentives in other parts of this country or the continent.

If passed, there would be additional consumer protection proposals. Professional liability would not be limited through incorporation, and share ownership of professional corporations would be restricted to members of professional associations.

In closing, I just want to say that I support this legislation. I give my time now to the member for Simcoe North.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a privilege to rise this evening to speak for a few moments on second reading, the House calendar motion debate of Bill 152, the Balanced Budgets for Brighter Futures Act, 2000. I believe this budget does bring a lot of bright futures. The long title of this act is An Act to implement the 2000 Budget to establish a made-in-Ontario tax system and to amend various Acts.

I'd like to thank my colleague from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, as well as the parliamentary assistant, David Young from Willowdale, for their comments.

I'd like to congratulate our finance minister, the Honourable Ernie Eves, for once again bringing forth a budget that all Ontarians should be proud of. This minister, as all Ontarians know, inherited probably the biggest financial disaster in the history of any of the provinces in our country, and certainly the biggest financial disaster in the province of Ontario. He did this back

in June 1995. Imagine the magnitude of a deficit of \$1 million per hour. That's \$11.3 billion per year he inherited, at exactly the same time that the federal government in Ottawa cut billions of dollars from our health care system.

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Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Garfield, the election's over.

Interjection: It's never over.

Mr Dunlop: You're right. Until it's fully restored to 1993 levels, this argument is never over. You'd better get used to that because you're going to hear a lot about it.

Ontarians believed in the ability of Finance Minister Eves. They believed in the Mike Harris Common Sense Revolution. They believed that Ontario could once again be the engine that drives the Canadian economy. They believed that a Mike Harris government would one day deliver a balanced budget even though Ontarians had lived through a 10-year cycle of tax and spend and borrow that had choked our province's growth and killed jobs. Worst of all was the loss in consumer confidence by all sectors that wanted to invest in our economy.

I chuckled the other day when I heard the member for St Catharines heckling that the budget could have been balanced five years ago. I really wonder how someone could have balanced the budget, how anybody on this planet could have balanced the budget, in 1995. I'm really curious how he actually does his math, especially when he sat as a member of cabinet of a Liberal government that increased taxes over 62 times when they were in power. Was it his intention to tax our citizens even more if his party had been elected? I don't think so. Higher taxes would only have driven the province deeper into debt.

I would suggest to you that it would take innovative ideas to turn this province around, and the Mike Harris government had the right approach: the only party with a platform, the only party with policies. The solution was to stimulate our economy by cutting taxes, a courageous and almost unheard-of move in this country. That courageous move, along with other difficult but necessary decisions, has resulted in the following:

Some 166 tax cuts in the last five years have resulted in revenues estimated by the end of this year at \$14 billion more annually than in 1995.

The private sector has created 830,000 net new jobs since September 1995. The province of Ontario is creating almost half of the jobs created in the country with only one third of the population. To me, that means that in the rest of the country we're not having the same economic growth. Certainly we know that's not happening in BC. It has happened in Alberta. Alberta is doing very well, and so is Quebec. I hear now that Newfoundland is coming on stream a little bit. But the rest of the country is not having the same kind of growth.

Over 530,000 people have left their dependency on welfare. A lot of people say these are minimal jobs that have been created, that we're taking people off welfare and they are minimal jobs. But we look at those jobs as

stepping stones to other jobs. In a lot of cases, people have two and three jobs because they are able to find them. In fact, in Simcoe county in my riding, in 1995 we had 11,000 cases of welfare. Today that's down to 3,800.

The real economic growth for 1999 ended up being 5.7%. The Ontario economy grew faster in 1999 than those of all of the industrialized countries in the G7. I know the opposition doesn't want to hear about these things. They say it's because of the American economy and all these other reasons, but the fact of the matter is that we have a strong economy here in Ontario that doesn't exist throughout the rest of our country. More people are working, more people are spending, and we are expecting even stronger economic growth, resulting in provincial revenues surpassing our projections. Those projections are now at \$5.3 billion more for 1999. With that \$5.3 billion we've been able to invest in a lot of hospital work, construction and modernization. We've invested in a lot of post-secondary education spaces. We wanted to give people some of their money back as well.

With these things accomplished, we've had a surplus of \$654 million in the 1999-2000 budget year, meaning the budget was balanced last year. This will be the first time, last year along with this year, that we'll have balanced budgets two years in a row: the first time since 1942-43 and 1943-44, 56 years ago, that that has happened in the province of Ontario.

I'd like to take a moment and talk a little bit about health care spending. I know we heard a little bit of heckling a little earlier on, but in 1999 we promised to invest no less than \$17.4 billion in health care. In 1995-96 we spent \$17.6 billion; in 1996-97 we spent \$17.8 billion; by 1998-99 it went up to \$18.9 billion; in 1999-2000 we're planning on investing \$20.6 billion; and next year we'll go to \$22 billion a year.

I say that again because I'm very concerned about the federal transfer of money. We keep talking about tax points and all these things, but the bottom line is that there will be no additional money transferred, we understand, until April or May of next year. It is very important that we as a province receive that money from the federal government. You have to remember that when the economy of Ontario is strong, the federal government is receiving almost half of its revenue from the province of Ontario, so we do expect some of our money back.

I know the member from Scarborough East has a number of comments to make on the budget and I would be pleased at this time to turn the floor over to him and he can carry on.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I thank my colleagues for allowing me a few minutes to speak to this important bill, the Balanced Budgets for Brighter Futures Act, 2000. I don't think anyone in this province is unaware of the fact that our government has led by example these last five years when it comes to cutting taxes, when it comes to making sure that as much as possible of the hard-earned money being generated in our booming economy stays in the pockets of the businesses and the individuals in this province.

Over those same five years, unfortunately, far too often, as we cut taxes in our provincial budgets a total of 166 times, in most years the federal Liberal government passed tax increases. In some years they were so callous that they were almost to the penny the offset to the tax cuts we had made. So people all across this province would look at their tax return every year and ask themselves what had happened to these savings they had heard about from our Common Sense Revolution promises and in the media every time they covered the news of another provincial budget.

With the publication of the little handout that was attached to the \$200 tax rebate that we sent out to millions of Ontarians, they saw for the first time, in hard dollars and cents, exactly what our tax cuts have meant to them. I can tell you that more than a few people in my riding of Scarborough East have commented to me that they had no idea that the tax cuts, year after year, meant thousands of dollars. The average person who has come to me has had a tax cut of \$6,000. All across the province it will vary, obviously, by your income level, by the number of deductions, by the number of dependants and that sort of thing, but as a general rule of thumb, Ontarians have saved over 30% on their income tax.

We have made a commitment, and in this bill we are acting on the commitment, to guarantee that in the future no one will be able to in any way, through smoke and mirrors or through any other artifice, block your ability to know exactly how much you're paying to the provincial government for the provincial services you are receiving. Never again will you have to rely on some arcane and very difficult calculation appended to a federal tax return to decide whether or not you're getting value for the money you pay.

If this bill passes and the creation of a made-in-Ontario tax system comes to pass, my expectation is that literally millions of Ontarians will for the first time understand what an extraordinary bargain they are getting. When they look at the relatively small amount of money they pay to Ontario in the form of their income taxes every year, and when they balance against that small amount the extraordinary quality of care they are receiving in our health care system, the extraordinary high-quality education system their children are receiving, the investments they see every day in expanding our roads and other infrastructure, they will see for the first time just what a bargain they get at the provincial level.

We can only hope that with the spotlight now very clearly shining on the federal government as a stand-alone, the federal government might want to turn around and apply some of the extraordinary amount of money they generate in Ontario back in Ontario investments.

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We pay 42% of all the federal income tax; in most of the programs we get back about one tenth of the federal spending. That isn't fair. By segregating, differentiating our tax system, for the first time the taxpayers in Ontario will see that inherent unfairness and they will recognize

which level of government has been gouging them at least these last five years.

We committed in the 2000 budget that by the year 2001 we would have a made-in-Ontario tax system. We're going to establish our own tax rates and our own tax brackets, a unique system that will guarantee that we have the ability, through various tax credits and future tax reductions, to make sure that the boom we've seen in our economy these last five years continues. We will not in any way be tied to the millstone of federal boondoggles and the totally inappropriate spending that has been the instigator of no fewer than four criminal investigations in the Prime Minister's own riding, and that just from the actions of one federal ministry.

Time does not permit a detailing of all of the federal expenditures that we believe are inappropriate and have certainly not been in the best interests of Ontario taxpayers. But I'll stay on topic here because I think we've got another good-news bill before us, and one can only hope that even at this late date, five years after our first election, the members of the opposition will see the wisdom of putting more money into the pockets of their own constituents.

We've gone further and we've guaranteed that by having our own tax system, we will be able to target specific areas of our economy that we believe need even further bolstering, further enhancement. One of those enhancements will be the Ontario research employee stock option credit. It's going to allow employees of any company, large or small, that spends a significant amount of money on research and development to get a personal income tax credit for the first \$100,000 of taxable employee benefits and the capital gains arising each year from any stock options.

We're also going to make sure that research companies that have done an awful lot to stimulate our economy these last few years continue to be attracted to our province. This tax incentive would increase the supply of skilled high-tech workers who are attracted to Ontario or given the incentive to remain in Ontario if this is where they got their education. By having access to that pool of skilled labour, we're confident that these high-tech companies will continue to grow and expand and create even further jobs and pay even more corporate tax in the future.

We're also proposing to help these high-tech firms to keep top employees by excluding from the employer health tax the stock option benefits for any employees of any eligible research and development companies. This measure would help those companies attract the best and brightest minds from all around the world by offering a competitive compensation package.

We've built into this bill a number of other research-oriented incentives. We've built in an educational technology tax incentive. It's going to encourage businesses to support Ontario's universities and community colleges in acquiring new teaching equipment and learning technology. Under the incentive program, corporations will get a tax deduction and unincorporated businesses will

get a tax credit on donations and price discounts to Ontario universities and colleges in respect to any new teaching equipment or computer software or learning technologies that they sell to them. This incentive, by the way, is over and above the tax deductions or credits which are currently available for donations and price discounts.

This bill goes far beyond incentives, though, for just the high-tech sector. There are a number of other sectors in the economy that we believe need further incentives to expand and create new jobs. We're proposing to enhance the Ontario book publishing tax credit to increase the maximum tax credit for each book, from \$10,000 to \$30,000, and to extend the credit to the first three books by any eligible Canadian author.

We're also proposing a regional bonus for film and television productions shot outside the greater Toronto area. This regional bonus will guarantee that Ontario not only remains competitive with other jurisdictions, but that the almost \$1 billion worth of annual benefit that has accrued to the Toronto area from film and television productions will in fact not only be distributed across a greater area in this province but hopefully will become the base for far greater investments by the film and television companies. We're going to expand the interactive digital media tax credit to include a limited amount of marketing and distribution expenses. This enhancement would go a long way to assisting small and emerging Ontario companies in the interactive digital media industry to compete internationally in marketing and distributing their products.

One of the other hallmarks of our government for the last five years has been our efforts to dramatically reduce the red tape that has been a tremendous burden on businesses large and small. I'm proud of the fact that we've eliminated literally thousands of regulations. We've scrapped redundant bills wherever possible. We've streamlined the way that business can do business and certainly the way they do business with the government. This bill incorporates another such enhancement. It's going to allow even more Ontario small businesses to use the short-form corporation tax return. The requirement to file a corporate tax return, as anyone who has done it would know, is very burdensome, very expensive and, quite frankly, a great revenue generator for accounting firms, but very often has been a very, very difficult burden for smaller corporations, in particular, to pay. Having a simplified tax return would reduce red tape for small businesses and go a long way to easing this burden.

Professional incorporation is another area targeted in this bill. The bill would also go a long way to allow professionals to incorporate using professional corporations. I'm sure there isn't a member in this House who hasn't had any number of professionals, whether they were lawyers or doctors or accountants or others who have come to us and made an appeal that their ability to do tax planning, their ability to shelter themselves from personal liability has been complicated and compromised

by the fact that they could not incorporate. At the moment, Ontario allows only certain regulated professions such as architects and professional engineers to incorporate their practices. Other self-employed professionals, including physicians, dentists, lawyers and accountants, would be given the option of choosing whether or not they wanted to incorporate.

We've listened to the comments from the governing bodies for those professions, and we've now proposed the right to incorporate to all those regulated professions, as well as to certified general accountants, who are governed by a private act. The legislation would absolutely maintain personal professional liability and would protect the public interest but, quite frankly, would address a very long-standing concern by a wide range of professionals, something that I'm sure first came to the attention of parliamentarians long before we were elected in 1995, but an issue that was not addressed by either of the previous two governments.

We have other important issues in this bill, but I'll dwell on just one. We intend to support the mining sector by providing a 10-year or \$10-million profit exemption from the mining tax for eligible remote mines. There is no doubt—any of the northern members would certainly know all too well—that the parts of Ontario close to the Trans-Canada Highway and other major routes have already largely been explored and everything we're going to find has been found, but there are vast areas in northern Ontario that have been relatively inaccessible, that contain who knows what resources. It has been very expensive for the mining companies to access those sites. We believe that it's appropriate for us to give a tax incentive to encourage those investigations and to encourage that research. There is no doubt that over this past century Ontario has derived great benefit from the mining community. In fact, it is arguable that Ontario alone could be considered the miners to the world. Our technology, our expertise, gained by companies like Inco and Falconbridge, has now been taken and applied all in mining sites all around the world—in Malaysia and Peru—not just Canada, but the world. Far more often than not, it is Ontario companies that have been in the forefront of doing that expensive—and very profitable to those communities—research.

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We'd like to see those investments brought back to Ontario. We think it is long overdue and, quite frankly, shameful that companies like Inco have been taxed out of new research in Ontario, that Peru and Malaysia became more attractive. We've gone a long way, through the changes to other corporate taxation and other elimination of red tape in the mining industry, to level the playing field. But now we are very specifically targeting the need and the reality that it is remote sites that will be the salvation of the mining community, certainly 10, 20 or 50 years into the future.

After a remote mine has used its 10-year or \$10-million exemption, the profits from that mine would still only be taxed at a rate of 5%. My goodness, when you

contrast that with the corporate tax rate that we inherited in 1995, it is a day-and-night comparison. It's small wonder that our economy, not just the mining industry but our entire economy, has grown at a rate greater than that of any of the other industrialized nations of the world. To have heard in our recent economic statement from the Minister of Finance that Ontario's economy grew at 6.1% this past year is nothing short of remarkable. I would encourage my colleagues opposite, when they are considering their comments to this bill, to keep in mind the investments that are being made by Ontarians in their communities to be part of the great success story that is the Ontario economy. The same claim that we were number one in the world can be made for each year since 1996.

I hear all too often from my colleagues opposite that somehow it's the American economy and what's happened there that has profited Ontario. In saying that, they obviously have come up with a new theory, some new law of physics where the engine that's pulling can go slower than the cars that are being pulled, because that is very much the case. If the Americans are responsible for our growth, they have a hard time explaining why we've grown faster. They also have a hard time explaining it if Ontario, as certainly the dominant player in the Canadian confederacy, has always been the number one jurisdiction for job creation and tax generation, but more or less, a constant percentage of the national percentage of the national performance. They have a hard time explaining why, since 1995, whatever growth the American economy supposedly has created has really only profited Ontario. They can't quite explain why all the other provinces, with the possible exception of the Conservatively governed Alberta, have not seen the same American spinoff benefit. I'm waiting to hear the answer for that, but after five years, so far not a peep.

To go back to the mining exemption, in 1996 we announced that we would investigate further partnerships between the government and the private sector to build infrastructure and stimulate resource development in remote areas north of the 51st parallel. This bill goes a long way to guaranteeing the mining industry will have all the tools they need to make those very expensive investments in new mining sites.

I know that speaking last in the rotation comes with some risk that a lot of the good news has already been shared by your colleagues, but I think it bears repeating that this bill has to be seen as just the next step in a continuum that dates back all the way to the Common Sense Revolution, which itself predated the 1995 election by 13 months. We have had an absolute commitment and we have honoured the commitment to make sure that Ontario's tax system was the most competitive, not just in Canada, not just in North America, but all around the world, as no less a person than Prime Minister Chrétien announced down in Durham, North Carolina, just a couple of days ago. Talking to an American audience, he paid great tribute to the Ontario tax system—not the federal one. He singled out Ontario and said that our tax

cuts, our reduction in red tape, all the incentives we've built in to attract new business are something that every American business should keep in mind when they are considering where to build their next plant.

Interjection.

Mr Gilchrist: I'd be happy to share with my Liberal colleagues opposite the inspired and informed utterances of the Prime Minister. The fact of the matter is that, maybe for the first time ever, I agree with Prime Minister Chrétien. I agree that the Ontario tax system is worthy of applause; it is worthy of praise. The fact of the matter is that we have seen not just the creation of 830,000 new jobs, not just the increase in revenue by \$14 billion, but at the same time we understand and it is clearly demonstrated that each Ontarian is paying a smaller portion of that bigger pie. Everyone has seen their taxes go down by an amount that was absolutely unprecedented. It has never been done before or since by any jurisdiction in Canada or, to the best of my knowledge, any jurisdiction in North America.

We've not heard any questions from the Liberals, in particular, for probably the last two years when it comes to challenging our original expectations on job creation, on balancing the budget, stimulating the economy. They've gone on to other causes du jour, but hardly a day went by when Mr Phillips or one of his colleagues wouldn't be on his feet suggesting that his crystal ball told him that we would fall short of our promise of 725,000 new jobs and that there was no way that tax cuts create jobs, there's no way that tax cuts bring in more revenue. Mr Phillips clearly ignored the fact that we were the 54th jurisdiction in the world that had cut marginal tax rates and we were the 54th jurisdiction in the world that cut marginal tax rates that saw their revenue increase. We had the faith that money left in the pockets of Ontarians personally and as entrepreneurs would stimulate the economy, in stark contrast to what had happened in the lost decade between 1985 and 1995.

This bill goes a long way to guarantee not just that those tax cuts will be cemented for all time and no government would be able to slip an increase through under the cover of the federal tax system, but that for the first time Ontarians will know which level of government has cut their tax, which level of government is investing those increased sums into improved infrastructure, which level of government is truly committed to making this the best place to work, live and raise a family.

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr Bartolucci: I listened intently to the speakers on the other side over the course of the last hour, and they didn't mention at any time during the discussion that they'll be spending \$8.9 billion just to finance the debt over the course of the next year. They didn't mention that they added \$24 billion to the debt over the course of the first term. Now, this is a government that is supposed to be so good with money. They also didn't mention that they borrowed \$10 billion for their tax cuts. They also didn't mention that the amount of money that they're going to use to finance the debt is approximately \$800

million more than they're putting into the education system.

No wonder that government-appointed committee, the Education Improvement Commission, told this government, "If in fact you want a brighter future for Ontario students, if you want a brighter future in education, you're going to have to put back the millions of dollars into education that you took out. You're going to have to go back to the basics in education so that you'll have children who are taking part in meaningful early education programs. You're going to have to have professional development for teachers in a meaningful way." They said this government should provide a positive learning environment and that there should be some accountability network in place for the government. If the government members across the way are interested in a brighter future, I would suggest they start listening to people on the Education Improvement Commission and start re-investing in education and start making a difference to the people of Ontario.

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Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I'd like to pick up on the comments of the parliamentary assistant, who led off the debate for the government side today. But before I do that, just with regard to the previous speaker, it's interesting that the Liberals continue to talk about reinvestment, rebuilding and putting money back in that has been cut by the Tories, but in the last election they never did explain where the money was going to come from. They weren't upfront enough to say, "We're going to get it from new tax revenue sources here," or, "We're going to cut money here to place it there." They never did that. All they did was say, "What the Tories did was horrible," which we agreed with, but they didn't offer up where the money was going to come from. Although it may not have been the biggest political win of the electoral season last year, we were upfront, and we were very clear about where we would get the money, and maybe it's about time the Liberals started talking about that and linking it with their criticisms.

It's interesting that during his opening comments the parliamentary assistant was bragging about the fact that they had balanced the budget, and I'm sure through the course of this debate we're going to hear many Tory backbenchers do that also. But it's important to remember and to remind members of the government that had you not brought in your tax cuts—I realize you've got your spin on what that is and we've got our take on what that means, but nonetheless, just the numbers themselves say that if you had not given the tax cuts upfront but allowed that money to be used to reduce the annual deficit of the government of Ontario, we would have had a balanced budget years earlier and we wouldn't have had the slashing and cutting that we saw go right across and continue across the province. If you had just waited, as many economists suggested you should, we wouldn't have had to go through all that pain, but then again, you wouldn't have had the billions to give to your rich friends, would you?

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My colleague from Hamilton West is wrong on his second point, but he's right on the first point, the first point being that the Liberals will want to spend billions and billions of dollars. They announce in here every day all these different programs that they would give more money to, but they never want to explain where the money is going to come from. The member is very right to say that they never will define that. I think he's correct in saying that.

He's wrong, though, when he says if we had not touched the tax system the economy—he is assuming that the economy would have grown to the extent that it did grow without any tax cuts, without any of the other changes this government made from 1995 to 1999. We know that's wrong, because the biggest part of the economic growth that has happened in this province over the past five years has been on the consumer-driven, consumption side of the economy. The vast majority of the growth has come on that side of the economy, and that was driven, quite frankly, substantially by the tax cuts. So you would not have had the revenue stream simply by saying, "With the following economic growth, with the old tax rate, what would the revenue stream have been?" That's the error in the assumption that the opposition makes all the time. We knew that going in, and that's why we cut taxes, at the same time getting government spending, which was out of control, under control. Yes, we did add to the debt. If you go back to the 1995 red book, the Liberals said they were going to balance the budget in four years, at the same time doing tax cuts.

They also complained and screamed about every single expenditure reduction that we made on this side of the aisle for four and a half years, so how they would have pulled off that economic miracle no one knows. The answer is, they probably wouldn't have. But they rarely have to prove or put into practice what they preach in their red book.

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I am pleased to stand here to reminisce a little bit too. Since this government took over, they have increased the debt by \$24 billion and \$8.9 billion to finance the debt. I'm also worried about many of the things they have downloaded on to the municipalities: social housing and ambulances. I'm also concerned about what is happening in our hospitals. I know that in my part of Ontario you can't even get into an emergency room right now. There are staff shortages. We have two hospitals operating right now, and that is going to be one hospital shortly.

I know that the nurses and the doctors are frustrated. There are all kinds of tensions. They can't get the people they need to help. I think in the education system we're taking it out on our students where we shouldn't be, and it's all to do with this government.

Then we get into the infrastructure. Many municipalities in our part of Ontario—one in particular bought a farm because they couldn't afford to get any help from the government to build a bridge that connected that farm to the highway. I don't think that's the right way to go.

The old system under Bill Davis and some of the previous Tories was a lot better.

It's a disgrace in our agriculture community. We're facing weather conditions we don't have in a normal year. We have low oilseed prices. Many of the farmers have been leaving their corn in the field for the weather to dry down, and now we've got the big snowstorm so they'll probably lose their crop.

Things in our part of Ontario aren't as wonderful as the people across the way say they are.

The Acting Speaker: Response.

Mr Gilchrist: On the final comments made by the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, we've never claimed to have any control over the weather, so you'll forgive us for whatever problems accrue there, but everything else in your speech and the comments made by your colleague from Sudbury we totally disagree with. You throw these numbers out with gay abandon. The fact of the matter is that the only way the debt of the province of Ontario would not have increased is if on the first day after being elected in 1995 we had cut \$11 billion worth of programs. I've never heard any of you stand up and say that we are guilty of that oversight because, mathematically, you know that every minute—every minute—we were losing money—\$1.2 million an hour on the day that we were elected. So don't throw out these numbers and suggest that somehow if we had done nothing the economy would have grown, because the evidence is that nowhere else in Canada it did.

Where is your proof that any spillover effect would have accrued to Ontario just because we existed? The fact of the matter is that we took steps to differentiate ourselves from the rest of the jurisdictions in Canada and from jurisdictions in the United States. We cut taxes 30%. We eliminated the tax for the poorest Ontarians completely. You look at the difference between where our marginal tax rates start and where the federal cut-off point is and you tell me that federal Liberals care about poor people in this country. You earn \$7,000, they start taking money from you. The fact of the matter is that it is by having tax differentiation that was driven by cuts, that was committed to making sure more money stayed in your pockets and the pockets of your constituents. That's how this economy grew, that's why Ontario is leading the world and that's why it's going to continue to lead the world, not just in the rest of our term but all of our future terms.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to continue the debate on Bill 152, the tax bill. I just want to once again state what every economist in the province of Ontario knows to be the case. What has driven Ontario's economy in the last five years—and you will not find any economists who disagree with this—has been exports to the United States driven by the auto sector. Why is Ontario doing better than other provinces? Because 20, 30 years ago we were able to attract the auto industry to locate here. That's why Ontario has done well in the last five years, because of auto exports to the US.

Mr Gilchrist wanted the evidence of why Ontario is doing better. He can leave now, but that is the fact and every economist will tell you that is the case. Let's recognize the facts on this because we'd better understand that Ontario's economy is heavily dependent on auto sales to the US. I would say to Mr Gilchrist and others that it's simply a fact that since Premier Harris came in the debt of the province has gone up \$24 billion. We in the Liberal caucus have one hour to discuss this bill now. In that one hour, Ontario will pay \$200,000 just for interest cost on the debt that Mike Harris has added to the province.

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By the way, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

These are simply the figures that the government just produced. The debt servicing costs are \$9 billion on the extra debt that Premier Harris added. In the next hour we'll spend \$200,000 just to pay the interest on the debt that Premier Harris added. The reason I go over this is, if we in this province don't understand, we are now the most export-oriented jurisdiction in the world. That's what this economic statement says. We have gone from international exports representing 29% of our gross domestic product; they now represent 55%. And good for us. I'm proud that Ontario has been able to compete aggressively and effectively in the US. It is a testament, frankly, to the calibre of our workforce and the calibre of our business community.

By the way, I remind all of us that when we are undermining health care, education, the environment and our labour relations, those are all the things that the government says in its own document. "Why locate in Ontario?" It says, "Here's why you should locate in Ontario: because of the publicly funded health care system, because of our publicly funded education system accessible to everyone, because of our clean air and clean water, and because of our good climate of labour relations." And what has the Premier done since he became Premier? Almost the first act he did was to cut hospital budgets by 20%. I remember it well. It was in the spring of 1995, and that started our tremendous problems in our health care system.

I've never seen a worse relationship between our teaching profession and the provincial government than we have now. Make no mistake about it: what determines the quality of education is a well-motivated, well-trained teacher in front of a group of students, and we have undermined the key reason for a quality educational system, that is, the morale and the enthusiasm of our teaching profession.

With the cutting of almost 25% of our inspectors in the environment area, as the auditor said, we've lit the fuse of an environmental problem.

In the last few days we've been passing three bills that will rip apart our labour relations climate here in Ontario.

With that backdrop as we deal with this budget bill, let's all of us in the province appreciate how important

exports are to us. I know the government tries to underplay that because they want to say, "Listen, the tax cuts have been the thing that's driven the Ontario economy, not exports," but as the US economy is beginning to slow down somewhat, particularly in the auto sector, that has some significant implications for the province of Ontario. By the way, I'll add that the government says in this document, "US manufacturers pay, on average, more than \$3,100 per employee for the kind of health care coverage provided by Canada's publicly supported system, whereas Ontario employers pay about \$540 per employee." There's a \$2,500 per-employee cost advantage in the way that we fund our health care system here in Ontario versus the US. And make no mistake, that is a huge advantage for our auto sector, and thank goodness for it. It is a huge advantage for many of our industries to locate here.

But the latest government economic statement points out that now the corporate taxes in Ontario are—the combined corporate federal taxes—30%. In neighbouring states they're 40%. In other words, corporate taxes here in Ontario are 10 percentage points lower than the neighbouring US states. You might say that's terrific, but all right, how then do we fund our health care system? If we've determined it won't be on corporate taxes and we've determined that this is something that—and I dare say the Liberal Party, under Dalton McGuinty, certainly believes that a publicly funded, universally accessible health care system is the cornerstone of our society. If we are going to fund health care in a completely different way than the US, we have to have a debate around how we do that.

By the way, we attempted to have our all-party legislative committee, our finance and economic committee, debate this. We invited the finance minister to come and said, "Listen, this is an issue." But each year the all-party legislative committee gets one hour of the finance minister's time. I don't mean to be rude, but he spent more time with Tiger Woods since he became finance minister than he has collectively with our finance committee. He spent a total of five hours with us in five years; he's spent more time with Tiger Woods.

I raise that because surely, as we look ahead here in Ontario, and we want to have a publicly funded health care system, we're going to have to determine how we fund it. We've determined we want corporate taxes significantly lower than the US bordering states, we've determined we want our capital gains tax at or lower than the US states, we've determined we want our income tax at or lower than the US and we've determined we want our property taxes at or lower than the US. All right, then. Let's discuss how we fund health care.

I want to turn to several aspects of the bill. The first thing I want to talk about—none of the Conservative members mentioned this—has to do with the continued chaos—there's no other word for this—in our electrical generation and distribution system in the province of Ontario. It's a mess, and this bill has many sections in it. It was instructive that of, I think, the five members of the

Conservative Party who spoke on the bill, none mentioned the electrical provisions in this bill.

What it does, among other things, is continue the delay in opening up the marketplace. We're getting—I'm sure all the members are; certainly my office is—calls from concerned residents saying, "I've got people trying to sell me electricity and I don't know what I'm buying here, but they're putting the pressure on me to sign up for the distribution of electricity and I don't know what I'm signing."

This bill delays again the debt retirement. The Provincial Auditor pointed out in his special report just last week that the province tried to keep the debt of Ontario Hydro off their books, and he wouldn't let it happen. He said, "I insist that the debt of Ontario Hydro be on the province's books." By the way, they're on the books for a considerable amount of money. It was about \$19.4 billion the previous year and it went up to \$19.8 billion, a debt about which the auditor is saying, "Listen, I want that on the books. I want it shown on the books because if the plans don't work out"—and there's a risk that they will—"who will be ultimately responsible? It will be the Ontario taxpayers."

I think there are six different provisions here in the electrical area, and one of them is to postpone even further the beginning of the debt retirement repayments. Last year, as you can see, the debt went up another \$500 million and I guess it'll go up another \$500 million as this debt retirement plan gets stretched out further.

So a significant part of this tax bill continues, and by the way, it had nothing to do with the budget; this was just put into this budget bill to try and patch over some of the problems that are being created in the marketplace right now. Also, when we were first told about this new plan for Hydro, we were told that the generation plants and the end users would pay the retirements costs. We now find, of course, that they've taken it right off the generation; it's now exclusively on the ratepayers.

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The second thing I want to talk about is this made-for-Ontario tax program. This is interesting because, as the federal government made the announcement that it will be reducing personal income taxes, Premier Harris got frightened to death that as the federal government cut its income taxes, because the province of Ontario's income taxes have been as a percentage of the federal tax, Ontario's tax revenue would begin to drop. So it's no coincidence that this made-for-Ontario tax policy came in just at the time when the federal government was reducing taxes, and all this does is rejig the numbers so Ontario essentially recovers the same amount of money.

I say to all of Ontario that this thing is positioned as, "We are going to have our own tax policy. We are going to separate from the federal government." What is without question driving this is the fact that, as the federal government reduced its taxes, the province of Ontario thought, "We're going to have to find a new system and make sure we recover the same amount of money." I might add that with the announcement of the federal

government's tax cuts starting January 1, 2001, the province of Ontario is going to have to look at some fairly significant cuts in its rates or else Ontarians will be paying more under this system than they would have been paying under the old system. By the way, all the other provinces are doing it because they all face the same problem, and that is, as the federal government is aggressively cutting its income taxes, they frightened about their own revenue drying up.

I want to pick up on a couple of comments made by a couple of members. I would hope that Ontario will not continue to rattle sabres about setting up a completely separate tax collection system. That would cost at least \$300 million. It is a monumental cost to the taxpayers, an extra \$300 million just here in the province of Ontario, and it's frankly all about egos. Rather than attempting to reach solutions—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Would the members take their conversations outside. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: Rather than continuing to rattle sabres about small jurisdictional matters, I think Ontario looks to its government to not be contemplating wasting at least \$300 million setting up its own tax collection system. I was encouraged when one of the members—I think it was the parliamentary assistant—said they wouldn't contemplate that, but then we still hear threats that they might do that. When Canadians are looking for their governments to streamline, when Canadians are looking for their governments to operate more efficiently, the thought of us setting up a completely separate collection system is, at the very least, strange.

The next one I want to talk about is the incorporation of professionals. I gather from the comments of the government members that the fundamental purpose of this is to allow—I hope I'm paraphrasing one of the members accurately—a significant tax advantage to the establishment of a corporation. I think one of the members said, "This will minimize the risk of losing these people to the United States because it will substantially enhance their remuneration." I understand that, and there is a substantial tax advantage. But I would just say that what we're doing here is allowing the incorporation of chartered accountants, lawyers, certified general accountants, public accountants, veterinarians, chiropractors, dentists, dietitians, social workers, midwifery, nursing, optometry, pharmacy, psychology, dental hygiene, dental technology—

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): Podiatry.

Mr Phillips: Podiatry is right, thank you—quite a broad range of individuals who can now set up their own companies. The reason for that is because they will get a substantial tax advantage. I'm gathering from the comments that this will keep some of them from moving to the US.

If the issue is that in order to keep these people from moving to other jurisdictions we really have to find a

way to increase their remuneration, and this is the way we are going to do it—we are going to allow them to incorporate and this will help to increase the remuneration and therefore we'll be less likely to lose them—then it raises a question for those who can't incorporate. What do they then do? How do they increase their remuneration?

I understand that governments love to have what's called a tax expenditure rather than the other kind of expenditure because it doesn't show up as an expenditure, just as a reduction in tax revenue. I would say that if the purpose of this is to keep many from moving to the US, I think we should re-examine whether we are remunerating the profession properly, because if it's just going to end up with whatever number, 5% or 10%, of the profession incorporating and therefore doing quite well, the other 95% may not be in an environment that's conducive to incorporation.

I raise that issue. It's interesting. We are broadening it, as I say, to a wide range of people, and I think it raises the question of whether we should be looking at the total remuneration as opposed to allowing a few of them to increase their remuneration through incorporation.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: Mr Wood says it's a free market. Yes, it is a free market, but if you're a nurse working in a hospital, you can't incorporate. If you are a nurse working in a different environment, you can. So if our problem is that we're losing nurses, particularly in the hospital situation, if this is designed to solve that, it won't solve it. This is not a solution. Mr Wood said, "Let the marketplace handle it." Nurses working in hospitals, on staff at hospitals—and I think we want our nurses part of the hospital. If now the solution is that in order to get a raise in the province of Ontario, you should incorporate, if that's the solution, if that's what this bill is all about, then surely we are heading in the wrong direction.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: Mr Wood asks if I am against a level playing field. What I'm in favour of is finding ways that we keep our talented people in our health professions working in the important areas. So if you're saying, "Listen, nurses, here's the Mike Harris salary increase. This is how you can get more money: go out and incorporate. Set up your own corporation, give yourself a name for the corporation, and you'll be able to get a significant raise in remuneration because you have all these tax advantages," that's not going to help our hospitals. If you say to our social workers, "Listen, we're not going to pay you any more but here's a good idea: go out and incorporate. Set up your own business, social workers. It's the marketplace. It's Mike Harris's marketplace and you've got to get with the program. You've got to incorporate, set up your own company, become Social Worker Inc. That's how you get an increase," that's not where I think we want to go.

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If Mike Harris says, "Listen, the only way that social workers and midwives are going to get any increase in my Ontario is that you've got to have your own corpora-

tion. You've got to set it up and you've got to let the old marketplace handle it," if that's what this is all about, is that really what we want to do? I don't think so. It isn't. It's a short-term benefit for a doctor who wants to set up—this came heavily, I think, out of the agreement signed by Mike Harris and the Ontario Medical Association, and it is probably a fairly substantial tax advantage for doctors. They can set up their own corporations. They can probably have a multi-doctor corporation. This probably facilitates owning buildings and things like that. But we are told this legislation now is designed to help nurses and social workers increase their pay so they don't have to go to the US. It seems to me this is not a solution to that problem.

I wanted to talk about another part of the bill, and that is the provision for the \$100,000 capital gains tax exemption for research employees. I gather from the government that this will involve about 6,000 or 7,000 people and will involve an expenditure of \$70 million. This is not an insignificant amount of money. This is \$70 million that the government has said we're prepared to forgo on tax revenue in order to keep highly skilled, research-oriented people. It's for firms that the parliamentary assistant mentioned, firms that spend 10% of their expenditures on research-oriented expenditures, for those employees. I understand. Today this is the high-demand group. These are the people who can kind of shop their talents worldwide. These are people who, I gather, are not unlike professional baseball players: in order to keep them here in Ontario, you've got to offer bonuses and you've got to offer really an attractive environment. As I say, for these 6,000 or 7,000 people it's \$70 million; this is the government's number out of its budget.

Maybe we've got to do that—we're going to do it—but I would also say that they are not the only people I worry about keeping here in Ontario. So \$70 million for 6,000 or 7,000 high-flying research people is—and I realize that in this era of e-commerce and Internet and high-tech and computers—is very much seen as something that Ontario needs to do to stay current with the rest of the world. I'm just saying to all of us that we have problems with other talented people who are leaving Ontario that also need addressing.

Two groups come to my mind instantly; first, the thousands of nurses we lost over the last few years. I know the Premier doesn't like to hear this, but when he cut the hospital budgets—he did that within the first three or four months of taking over—the nurses said, "You're going to lose a lot of talented people." He said, "Sorry, but they're like Hula-Hoop workers. Their time is gone. Nurses may have been important before. Hula-Hoops were important and people had to make them, but they were a passing fad," and we lost a significant number of nurses to the United States. Now we're desperate to get them back.

We've decided we're going to spend \$70 million on the high-tech group, and I understand that. My leader, Dalton McGuinty, is from Ottawa. He talks often about technology to us. He understands it and we recognize the

importance of continuing to develop our technology industry here in Ontario. It has been an engine driving it, no question. Ottawa has been driven by technology. The Waterloo area has been driven by technology; the Markham area has been driven by technology. All those things are important. But we are dealing with one group of people here, and that is 6,000 or 7,000 technical people, and we're not addressing what for many of us is certainly a bigger short-term problem: how do we attract our nurses to come back to Ontario and how do we keep our teachers from going to the United States? As I say, within the budget it's \$70 million—not an insignificant amount of money, but there's no program here for dealing with illness.

I want to touch briefly as well on the film issue. What Toronto has done is made itself Hollywood North. It has, over 15 years or so, developed a terrific industry of making films here. What this budget does is say, "We will give you a bonus if you do work outside the greater Toronto area." It's attempting to get film work done outside the GTA and you get a bonus for that. Frankly, I understand that, but my issue is this: when communities develop centres of excellence—and there are centres of excellence around Ontario. Guelph is a centre of excellence for agriculture; Ottawa and Kitchener-Waterloo are centres of excellence for high-tech; Sudbury is a centre of excellence for mining. We want to be cautious when we say, "You've been too successful. We're going to now step in and reward companies that locate elsewhere and offer them a bonus." In this particular case, I can understand it. It's an attempt to move a modest amount of the production outside Toronto. I just caution us that as communities work to develop their own unique industries, we have to be careful that the province doesn't step in and say, "Time for us to undermine all the work you've done."

On the tax bill, some significant concerns. On the electrical side, this just perpetuates the chaos as we once again have six or seven provisions that have nothing to do with the budget; they're basically to do with patching up the Hydro situation. On the made-for-Ontario tax scheme, let's be completely candid: it was designed to keep the revenue in Ontario that they were going to lose as the federal government cut its taxes. I was encouraged to hear one of the government members say they're not going to proceed aggressively to set up their own tax collection system. That would be a \$300-million boondoggle of the taxpayers' money when we should be working together. As I say, if the incorporation of individual professionals is purely to give them a pay raise that couldn't be gotten in other ways, then we're not going to deal with some of those professionals who have no opportunity to incorporate but equally deserve a raise.

Just to conclude my remarks, remember what has driven the Ontario economy has been our exports to the United States—thank heaven, thank goodness for the United States' strong economy—not the tax cuts.

Mr Gerretsen: I'm always pleased to join these debates on the budget and on the budget bill etc, because

it always gives me an opportunity to go back to the government's own document, its own Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review. From listening to the government members here earlier, you would think that everything is just great in the province of Ontario. I'm sure there are an awful lot of people watching tonight who would say to themselves, "If everything is so great, why do we have, first of all, such chaos in our education system?" Now, we know what has caused it. We know that this government's continuing attack on the teachers of this province has lowered morale to probably an all-time low. In a lot of areas of this province, there is no such thing as extracurricular activities any more outside of school hours. A lot of our students are suffering from that. Let's face it, the extracurricular activities are a part of the education process of our students, and that is lacking.

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Why do we have this constant strife within the system between the teaching federations and the government? Who is suffering from all that? We know who's suffering from all that. They are our students. Many of those students, particularly the students who are now in grades 10 and 11 and will be part of the double cohort problem in the year 2003, which this government still hasn't dealt with, are suffering from that. I hear from students and parents all the time who wonder what is going to happen in the year 2003, when all of a sudden we have an extra 80,000 students who are graduating out of our high school system ready to go into colleges and universities.

I know the government has made some provision for some capital expansion of some of our universities and colleges. I know that in my own community of Kingston a \$40-million expansion that is taking place at Queen's University which will add a new building with new lecture halls etc is a plus, as well as at St Lawrence College, which has a \$16-million expansion. But absolutely nothing has been done with respect to making sure that the human resources, the professors and the instructors, are going to be there to be able to teach the extra numbers that will be entering our universities and colleges. That is a major concern. Every time that it has been raised with the minister, either in the House or away from the House in private conversations or in correspondence, there has been a total silence on that issue.

I know that currently a study is taking place with some professors at Queen's University who are looking into this situation. But the parents, the students, the universities, the colleges, everyone involved in the system, want to see what the answer is going to be and want to have an answer to that situation. On top of that, we all know there are many people who are teachers in our colleges and universities who are also ready to retire during that period of time. So the boom of the 1960s and early 1970s that took place in our university and college system that required a great number of new instructors and professors to come into the system—these people are ready to retire in another three or four years, and where are the qualified teachers, instructors and professors

going to come from? I say to the government that if you have all this money available, if you have all these surpluses, why don't you reinvest it into some of our educational programs both at the primary-secondary and post-secondary levels?

Second—and I'm very pleased to see that the Minister of Health is here tonight—there is still a great turmoil in this province about health care. I know that the minister probably doesn't want to hear this because I'm quite sure that she, being the honourable member she is and the hard-working minister she is, no doubt deals with these problems on a day-to-day basis. I for the life of me cannot understand why, if everything is going so well in the province of Ontario, we still have these continuing pressures, for example, within the ambulatory care system where ambulances cannot get into hospitals because waiting rooms are overcrowded; people are unable to get into hospitals; they have stretchers in hallways, and all sorts of problems like that; why there isn't enough money for home care and nursing care.

I think we can all agree that the way medicine was practised maybe 20 or 30 years ago is by and large no longer necessary. Then when somebody went into a hospital quite often they were there for a long period of time to recuperate. I realize that with modern technology and modern methods of dealing with patients in our hospitals they no longer have to spend the same length of time in hospitals. From a philosophical viewpoint, we have absolutely no problem with patients being able to recover in a setting other than a hospital, whether it's in their own home or in some other institutional setting of perhaps somewhat lesser care etc. But what has to take place at the same time—and Duncan Sinclair spoke about this right from the very beginning when he took on the hospital restructuring situation back some four or five years ago. He made it quite clear that if you're going to make some major changes to the hospital system and if you're going to cut the number of hospital beds and close hospitals, you'd better have the community care facilities and resources available to take care of people outside of the hospitals. That is where this government has been sadly lacking. I think it's high time that in this province and in this country we start talking about a mandated home care or nursing care or community care system.

Everyone will agree that if a person doesn't need the expensive daily care in a hospital and can be dealt with efficiently, effectively and in a very compassionate fashion elsewhere—in their own home—then that's possible. But we want to make sure that those nursing care individuals and the homemakers are going to be available for these people, and that isn't happening right now.

In my constituency office—and I'm sure I'm not alone; I'm sure this happens to other members as well—I still get call after call from people who are being discharged from hospitals and sent home, quite often without any kind of home support at all—they may not have a family at home etc—and they are being given either no home care or nursing care at home at all, or they're limited to one or two hours a day, which is completely

inadequate for their particular purposes. So I say to the minister, rather than promoting the corporate tax cuts or personal income tax cuts that this government is currently implementing in this bill, why don't we take some of that money and put it into community care? That's where it's needed. For those people, the tremendous boom taking place in some parts of the province—and by the way, the economic boom hasn't taken place in all of the province at all.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Rich people can afford it themselves.

Mr Gerretsen: That's right. Rich people can afford it themselves, as the member for St Catharines said, but for many people they are lacking those services currently.

The other group, whom I know the Premier doesn't want to talk about, are children on social assistance. Today he was asked a question in the House about whether he was even contemplating raising the amount of social assistance money that can be made available to children on welfare, since that was cut by 21% in 1995 and there has been absolutely no cost-of-living increase since that time, and he didn't want to answer the question. He said, "There are a lot of people who are no longer on welfare." That may be, and we all applaud that; everybody would applaud the fact that there are fewer people on welfare. But what we're talking about are those children who are still on welfare, for whatever reason. We know darn well it isn't their fault that they're on welfare. Why cannot we do something, if we have all this money in our provincial coffers, to make sure that the children who rely on social assistance through their parents can at least get a cost-of-living increase when in fact their circumstances have deteriorated quite drastically over the five years?

The other issue, of course, that I'm always interested in personally is the whole public debt situation. Again, reading from the government's own document, it's very interesting to see that now the interest service on our provincial public debt is higher than any category other than the amount spent on health care. The interest on the public debt, even with the low interest rates we've had over the last number of years, amounts to \$8.9 billion per year.

By comparison, just so the people out there will have some understanding of what we're talking about, all the community and social services money we're spending in this province for the current year is \$7.5 billion. This is right out of your own document. What we're spending on education that comes out of the provincial coffers is \$8.1 billion. There is an awful lot of money still coming out of the property taxes that people are paying on commercial and industrial properties and on residential properties as well. It may be half of what it was before, but there's still a significant chunk of money coming from that area. But in terms of what the province itself is paying from our tax dollars that we contribute through sales taxes, personal income taxes, corporate taxes etc, we are now spending less on education and less on community and social services than we are in interest on

the public debt. The argument that we've always made on this side of the House is that before you start giving any tax cuts to anybody, you've got to balance the budget, and I'm glad to see that the budget is balanced, because hopefully, at least, we are not going to add to this public debt more than what we have right now.

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But then, of course, we know another thing that this bill does. Instead of the \$114 billion in public debt that the people of Ontario might think is there—which by the way is \$24 billion more than when Mike Harris took over in 1995—we have in effect added another \$19.8 billion of Ontario Hydro's debt. That is the so-called stranded debt, which means the debt over and above 100% of the value of the assets, because the assets of Ontario Hydro are already mortgaged to 100%. But even over and above that amount, we have a debt of \$19.8 billion, and whereas at one time the energy generators used to pay at least a portion of the carrying charges of those debts, or of that particular debt of \$19.8 billion, now as a result of this bill that entire \$19.8-billion debt is going to be paid for either by the ratepayers or the taxpayers of Ontario, who are by and large the same individuals. The people of Ontario have to understand that. That's in addition to all the other energy cost increases we're going to see over the next little while.

We've heard a lot about that, which, by the way, is kind of interesting because I can still remember the Minister of Energy in this House stating unequivocally, when he wanted to break up Ontario Hydro into the different companies less than two years ago, that it was going to be done so that hydro charges and hydro energy costs would not increase in Ontario. What has happened since then? Since then energy costs have gone up and we all noticed this winter. We're expecting major increases of the utility bills. But even leaving all that aside, the ratepayers of the province of Ontario will in effect also have to pay the \$19.8-billion stranded debt of Ontario Hydro. That is a shame, because at one time the energy generators used to pay a portion of that debt, and that's no longer the case.

All I can say on that score is, yes, energy costs may have gone up, but certainly the additional cost that we're talking about in picking up the interest cost on the \$19.8-billion Ontario Hydro debt and the capital portion that has to be paid on a regular basis is going to make for even higher increases in cost to the taxpayers of Ontario than need be the case.

Finally, let me just say one very brief thing about the made-for-Ontario tax system. It's hard to believe that the province of Ontario would even contemplate setting up a taxation system that may cost an extra \$300 million per year to administer. Surely to God there can be absolutely no excuse for that whatsoever, and it's all done for one purpose and one purpose only, just so that the province will get credit for any further decreases in taxation, whereas under the current system, if the federal government decides to decrease the tax levels, the Ontario government wouldn't get credit for that.

Surely to goodness, if there's one thing that the people of Ontario should be totally upset about and communicate with their local MPP about it's the fact that we do not want another tax system set up here in Ontario that not only is going to cost the taxpayers an extra \$300 million per year, but is also going to be a lot more inconvenient to people when they fill out their annual income tax returns.

With that, I'll turn it over to the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I will actually take over from where the member for Kingston and the Islands left off. He was asking about wanting to get credit. What he should know is that Mike Harris and his government are always first in line to take the credit, last in line to accept any responsibility. If there's a photo op with the cheque, you can be sure there will be a Tory MPP there, large as life, a grin from ear to ear, to present the people with their own money, that is, with taxpayers' dollars. But when there is responsibility to be assumed for something that isn't going as it should, it is difficult to find that Conservative member, and certainly the Premier can be found only pointing fingers at someone else.

You are aware that we in the opposition, under the auspices of the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, Gerry Phillips, developed a new system for answering questions. Mr Phillips suggested we simply pull out a number and hold it up, in other words, the government do so, or just say, "Number one, number two, number three" because that would tell us who they were going to blame: number one was the federal government, number two was the Liberal government previously, number three was the NDP government, number four was the news media, number five the special interests, number six the unions, and the other day the Premier was blaming the world. He said, "There's a worldwide shortage of nurses."

Mr Gerretsen: Don't forget the Communist Party.

Mr Bradley: One of the members mentioned the Communist Party the other day.

I think what we have to look at is the value of the people who have been turfed by this government. We all recall that the government was going through the process of shrinking the hospital system in the province. It was ordered from on high, from the Premier's office. There was a commission set up which was to do the difficult work for the government of actually closing those hospitals. In my own community, we have the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines, and it was threatened with closure. I suggested at the time, when we began the fight, that it was going to be a very difficult fight. Some came on board after into the battle, not at the beginning.

I well recall there was a celebration the day the commission brought down its report and Hotel Dieu was saved from having its doors closed and bolted and the windows covered up. I can remember my friend Frank Sheehan was purportedly dancing an Irish jig on the steps of the Hotel Dieu Hospital. I can tell you, at the risk of being the prophet of doom and gloom of the day, I

predicted to many that it would become a glorified walk-in clinic. Unfortunately, a hospital which has a very strong tradition of 50 years of service to the people of the community, which has done such a good job in oncology, that is, the chemotherapy portion of cancer care, and such things as the kidney dialysis, the renal dialysis unit, is now going to have both of those, by dictum from the Ministry of Health apparently, snatched away and placed somewhere else.

Nobody in this world suggests that hospitals maintain the same responsibility they've had over the years. In fact, hospitals have been rationalizing services for some period of time. But here was an opportunity to have the regional services for cancer treatment and for renal dialysis at one hospital, along with an emergency ward, and I can tell you the emergency ward is going out the window. They're going to have a much scaled-down urgent-care unit. But at a time when ambulances are being sent from one area to another because the hospitals are on redirect—in other words, they can't take the patient in that hospital—here the government is announcing it's going to close down an emergency care centre, the emergency department of the Hotel Dieu Hospital.

This, from a government which is giving \$4 billion to the corporations of this province. The last I saw, the profit structure of corporations in this province was pretty healthy, and I'm happy about that. I think most people are going to be happy about that. Heaven knows these same corporations do not need yet another huge tax cut at the expense of some investments this government could make in important areas such as health care.

The other day there was a debate in this House over PSA tests—someone will correct me if I'm incorrect—I think that's the prostate specific antigen test, or something close to that. It's about \$20 to have it in many cases. I think that test should be free of charge. Should anybody be able to get it at any age, willy-nilly? I suppose the answer to that is no, but I do believe that test should be available to people. I've had letters from many people and calls from people who think that's a good test to have. Does it cost money? Yes. The Minister of Health better than anybody in this House knows how much health care costs. I'm here to support her request to her government and the requests of people across this province for an investment in health care.

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Look, the \$200 you sent to everybody—people will spend it on things. I'm giving mine to Community Care of St Catharines because it's an organization that does a good service for people who are at the lower end of the economic scale. Each member of the Liberal caucus committed to giving that money to a charitable organization of their choice. But I'll tell you, we could have used that money invested in the health care system. People suffering from macular degeneration have an opportunity to use—my friend from Fort William will correct me on the pronunciation—Visudyne, which is a procedure and a drug, a treatment, that can significantly help those people who have macular degeneration in their eyes and are in danger of losing their eyesight.

These are the kinds of investments I think we should make. This is where government belongs. Instead of giving huge \$4-billion tax cuts to the corporations in this province, we should be investing this money in the health care system and to protect the environment, because we've had huge cuts: one third of the staff of the Ministry of the Environment, 45% of the budget of the Ministry of the Environment. Maybe it's anecdotal, but some of my colleagues in this House who represent various areas say that the level of service on roads during winter conditions is diminished over what it was in years gone by. I think that's noticeable. It presents a greater danger for all of us. Again, I see investment in that area as a good thing.

I'm amused by those who just a few years ago, when the NDP was in power—I used to meet with the chamber of commerce political action committee or political affairs committee, and every time they would talk about the debt, "We've got to get that debt down," and I agreed that the matter of addressing the debt was important to all of us. But as soon as the Conservatives got in power the debt apparently vanished, because they now wanted huge tax cuts instead of cutting the debt. I agree with investing in important programs and projects in this province on one hand and paying down the debt in the other. I think the tax cuts should wait.

Look, this government has already implemented tax cuts. Whether it was right at the time or not, those tax cuts were implemented. Did it cost us money in terms of the debt rising? Yes. Because the government had to forgo—as the Canadian Bond Rating Service, hardly a bastion of Liberal or socialist thought, said, about \$5 billion a year was lost in revenue to this government as a result of those huge tax cuts while we were running a deficit. I had a hard time finding a Conservative in this world who would recommend cutting taxes when you already had a huge deficit in this province to deal with. As a result, today, to service the provincial debt we pay more than we do in the whole education budget. Education is important to invest in, both at the primary level, the secondary level and the post-secondary level. It's a good investment in the future, an investment in education. It makes us competitive, and I recognize we live in a very competitive world.

Energy costs are just going to skyrocket this winter. I notice that the Premier and some of his cabinet colleagues are like lions when they're dealing with the poorest people in this province one day. They want to put liens against the houses of people who are receiving social assistance; the next day they want to test them for drugs, as though everybody who is receiving public assistance is somehow suspicious because they somehow must be using drugs. They're large as life attacking those people. But when it comes to dealing with the energy sector, they're like kittens out there; not like lions, but like kittens. The major gas companies simply elbow them aside and charge whatever they want, regardless of whether it can be justified or not. They put the boots to independent dealers who try to provide a competitive price. We have home heating costs skyrocketing.

Just the other day the member for Pembroke asked a question in this House about providing some assistance to low-income people to beat those energy costs, because they aren't frills. Heating the house in the winter is not a frill in this province, particularly in areas where there is no competition and the only fuel you can get is one kind of fuel. All the fuel has in fact gone up. So the electricity sector is going to be rather interesting.

I see they're back to their old tricks of wanting to have their own tax system. They were deathly afraid that the federal government was actually going to cut taxes, and they did. But you see, when the federal government cuts income taxes, that automatically cuts provincial income taxes and these people did not want to lose that revenue in that particular case because they'd get no credit for the tax cut but they would have to raise their part of it simply to recover the revenues. So it's all about getting credit, just like the silly mailing of cheques to people. If you were intent on cutting taxes, they should have simply deducted that when you file your tax return. But it was all about getting a letter from the Premier or the Treasurer saying, "Ain't we great people? We're giving you a tax cut. We're giving you your dollars back." I tell you there are a lot of people in this province who would have liked to have seen that money invested in important essential services—not spent frivolously, but spent and invested in important areas of endeavour.

This bill is yet another interesting one for us to look at. I happen to believe that the Provincial Auditor has passed judgment on this government in more ways than one. Certainly, the Ontario Realty Corp has been generous with those who want to buy property from them. There seems to be a fire sale going on out there. I guess there's some kind of investigation going on at the present time. The Chair of Management Board will be out of his ministry by the time the report actually comes in. The word is that he's going to be moved to another portfolio, perhaps more senior. I don't know if there's anything more senior than Management Board. It's speculated that maybe even health—that's one speculation—or the treasury, one of the two. I just hope whoever takes over Management Board—and I hope it's not the Minister of Municipal Affairs who's stuck with this Ontario Realty Corp scandal where there seems to be property going at a fire sale rate.

The last thing I want to say, because I have to say this on many occasions—and the member from Erie-Lincoln is here to nod his head in agreement, I'm sure. We both want to pay tribute to our Minister of Municipal Affairs for not being bamboozled into having one big region and destroying all those communities in our area. I know Tim agrees with me on this particular issue and it's an enlightened point of view. Sometimes I disagree with him. It's an enlightened point of view on this particular occasion. Merger-Mania in the desk of the minister ensures that we will not have acquiescence to the one-big-city people.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Christopherson: Just to pick up on a comment by the member from St Catharines, he was reiterating a

point I'd made earlier, that many of us have made in this House, and that is that for the longest time we heard that the deficit and the debt were the absolute number one priority. Nothing was more important than eliminating the deficit and starting to eat away at the outstanding debt. That was the number one purpose, economically and politically, for the right wing and therefore for this government. That was the only thing that mattered. Any one who looks at the newspaper reports and the Hansards from when the government was over here in the third-party position, that's what they argued. As soon as they became government, suddenly that wasn't the number one priority. It had to be tax cuts. Suddenly that was more important.

Of course, we all know that a tax cut, when you're talking budget building, is a tax expenditure. It is an expenditure from the resources of the province, no different than if they had purchased equipment or if they had purchased a service and there was a bill sent and there's the money. In this case, the tax expenditure suddenly became more important than the deficit, but by incurring this tax expenditure, that left money available to put toward the deficit. So what happened? What was the big change? The big change was that in the ramp-up to and during the 1995 election, and I would argue the 1999 election, this government had political debts to pay. They incurred political IOUs, and that meant dumping the deficit as the number one priority. Tax cuts for your friends became the number one priority.

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Mr Young: It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to comment upon the submissions made by the members for Scarborough-Agincourt, Kingston and the Islands, and St Catharines. They spent a fair bit of time essentially trying to turn what is a good-news story into a bad-news story. While I appreciate that as opposition members that is one of their roles, I think in this particular instance it is a stretch that most of those who are watching from the galleries and those at home would have difficulty accepting.

Ontario is a province that over the last five years has seen unprecedented growth, growth that continues, jobs that continue to be created, debt that continues to be paid down, and I'll come back to that in just a moment. It's important to remember that while we do all that, we also accelerate and increase the amount of money that we pay for health care in this province. This year, health care spending will exceed \$22 billion. So while my friends opposite talk about how much they regret that the people of Ontario found a \$200 cheque in their mail, found their money being returned to them, while my friends opposite talk about how much they would like to have seen that money used for other things—and in fact, by my count there's about 48 other things they wanted to see it used for—regardless of where they would have placed that money, let's remember that we are continuing to invest in priority items such as health care.

It is only because the economy of this province has grown, it is only because we now have \$14 billion more coming in each and every year, with 166 tax cuts, it's

only because we have that increased revenue that we can afford to spend money in priority areas. That's what we have done, that's what we will continue to do and that's what this budget allows us to do for the foreseeable future.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I really am very pleased to have an opportunity to make some comments, and I do appreciate the presentations that have been made by all members of the House. We are talking about The Balanced Budget for Brighter Futures Act. In other words, we're making comments this evening on how the government has presented its plan to spend money. I think it's important for the members of the government to perhaps understand the impact that its plan has for people in my riding, Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

As you can appreciate, my riding is largely rural, so you can also understand when I say to you that issues relating to agriculture are very important to people in the farming communities in my riding. I have to say that farmers in my riding have not felt especially supported by the plan of this government; in fact, they have indicated to me they've felt especially left out. When we consider that they are the second-largest industry in Ontario and they receive less than 1% of the total expenditure of this government, when we see over recent weeks the mismanagement of a significant support program for farmers, Agricorp, I hope you can appreciate what we're trying to do here is have you understand that your plan for supporting and providing services for people in all of Ontario is not as effective as you think or would present publicly.

Another important area of concern in my riding is with regard to the environment, and so of course the fact that over the course of your term your government has significantly reduced the number of staff and the number of dollars that you have dedicated to the Ministry of the Environment. I'm not simply standing here as an opposition member saying no, we don't like what you're doing; I'm trying to have you understand that your plan is not effective in my community.

Mr Maves: I was just in the back reading some of the debates from 1995 and 1996 of the members opposite, and specifically some of the comments and questions asked by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. It's really interesting to see—my recollection was correct—how many times that member got up and talked about how the sky was falling. That member used to get up on a regular basis and try to do some math and say, "Where are the jobs? You haven't created the amount of jobs you said you were going to create." In the election of 1995, we said we would create 725,000 jobs over five years. So in the first couple of months he started dividing months by the amount of jobs that had been produced at that point in time in the economy. Of course the jobs wouldn't be created until our policies were implemented, which would take a bit of time, and our tax cuts were implemented. He used to get up and say, "Where are the jobs? Where are the jobs?" Sure enough, that member

had to eat crow, because we exceeded, in a five-year period, the 725,000 jobs that we predicted we would bring in.

The members opposite never ever thought we'd bring in the tax cuts we brought in. They never thought we'd be able to create the jobs that we've created. They never thought we'd be able to balance the budget in five years, which is what we promised, and in actual fact we balanced it in four.

As those folks sit at home tonight and listen to the debate, I encourage them to go back and read Hansard. Have a look at the members opposite. Have a look at the predictions they made back in 1995, 1996 and 1997. The sky was always falling: "You'll never reach your goals. You'll never cut those taxes. You'll never create those jobs. You'll never balance those budgets." They were wrong then and they're wrong tonight.

The Deputy Speaker: Response.

Mr Gerretsen: I thank all the members for responding, but I've got to respond to the last member. The problem is that there are still people not able to get into hospitals and get the kind of health care they need in a timely fashion. There is still the problem of ambulances being turned away at hospital doors and having to go on a redirect to other hospitals. There are still problems with people not getting the community care and home care they need on a day-to-day basis. There are still problems in our schools with children who need special education assistants and the money not being available for the different boards of education to pay for those services. There are all sorts of problems like that.

If everything is really all that well in the province, why don't you people take just a little bit of this excess money, and rather than cutting in a \$4-billion corporate tax cut and a \$1.2-billion personal income tax cut and a \$1.2-billion capital gains tax cut, solve some of these problems that we have in the education system and that real people have in the health care system—people who cannot get the care they need, who have to wait for an operation for an inordinate amount of time, and people who cannot get community care. I could just go on and on and on. Why don't you just do that? Then the world would really be perfect as far as you're concerned.

How about those 100,000 kids who are living on social assistance who haven't been given one penny of an increase over the last five years? Don't you feel you've got some responsibility toward those people as well? They are part of this society and, for whatever reason, may not be as fortunate as you and I, but they certainly need to be respected and taken care of in this province of plenty.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker: I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

Clerk at the Table: The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

Bill 128, An Act respecting social housing / Projet de loi 128, Loi concernant le logement social.

BALANCED BUDGETS
FOR BRIGHTER FUTURES ACT, 2000

(continued)

LOI DE 2000
SUR DES BUDGETS ÉQUILIBRÉS
POUR UN AVENIR MEILLEUR

(suite)

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: In the 15 to 20 minutes I have this evening as part of my leadoff, I want to begin by picking up on a comment of the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance. I'm paraphrasing and you're here, so if I'm wrong, if I'm misrepresenting you, please say so because that's not my intent. But I believe the essence of what you said was that the opposition is always trying to turn good-news stories into bad-news stories.

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Mr Wood: That's the gist of it.

Mr Christopherson: All I wanted to get was the gist of it.

Let me just say to the member that in terms of good news/bad news, it's not a question of what we do to the information; it's a question of how you're treating the people of Ontario as to whether or not it's a good-news story or a bad-news story.

For instance, right now, under your budget, if someone earns \$330,000 in Ontario, they're going to get \$10,000 as a result of the Tory tax cut. I've got to believe that if I'm a member of that family that's earning \$330,000 and we're going to get \$10,000 more—didn't do anything extra, didn't work any harder, didn't work any smarter, didn't do anything except maybe make a political contribution to a platform that works well for us; and there's nothing wrong with that; you would expect people would vote in their own best interests—I would think we'd be pretty happy. To them, this budget may be good news. Certainly, I would say to the government members, you could make that argument. If you give somebody 10 grand, they'd see it as good news.

On the other hand, let's remember that since 1996, in this province of plenty, which has more plenty than we've probably ever had in the history of Ontario, where that person earning \$330,000 is getting \$10,000 as a result of this budget, only Newfoundland shares the distinction of having a poverty rate that is increasing, meaning there are more people in deeper poverty since 1996 in Ontario and one other province than all the other provinces in Canada.

I would say with a great deal of respect to the parliamentary assistant that I don't have to manufacture or spin that as a bad-news story for those individuals who are in

poverty. The actions, the programs and the lack of attention and caring on the part of your government makes it, regardless of what I say, a bad news-story.

Further to that, today we voted second reading on Bill 147, changes to the Employment Standards Act, which again hurt the most vulnerable in our society. People who are governed by that legislation earn the minimum wage and right now that's \$6.85 an hour. Thanks to your new Employment Standards Act, they are going to be forced to work longer for less money. That's not me making it a bad-news story for those individuals. All they have to do is be at the poverty level of \$6.85 an hour and you make it a bad-news story for those individuals.

Think about it. Think of the difference in the world, the lifestyle, the quality of life, the things people think about, where they walk every day, their workplace surroundings, their home surroundings, everything about their very existence. Think about the difference between someone who earns \$330,000 a year—and I'm not saying they don't deserve it. That's not my point. My point is to ask all of us to take a minute and think about life at \$330,000 a year versus life at \$6.85 an hour. What are those two worlds?

This budget helped the people who are earning \$330,000 and did nothing for the people who are earning \$6.85 an hour. Ten thousand dollars will buy you a fair bit of quality of life in one year, especially if it's discretionary money that you don't have to put toward existing bills. The person earning \$6.85 doesn't get that. In fact, the average family will be lucky if they see a few hundred bucks.

In terms of good news and bad news, I really don't think it's a question of political spinning or posturing; it's just a question of looking at the reality, breaking away all our words and seeing who benefits, who loses and who pays for those who are benefiting.

Some \$1.3 billion in new tax giveaways, a total of \$4 billion by 2004; this is a corporate Ontario budget. I would remind members that this is not the depths of a recession or depression, when every single tool and lever of government must be brought to bear to revive the economy. It's the exact opposite. In fact, the Globe and Mail's Report on Business recently reported that—get this—173 major public companies in the last quarter earned \$7.6 billion in profits, up 20% from a year ago.

If that were the end of the story, most people would probably say, "Hey, I guess things are doing well. I guess that means I've got a little more security, my family has a little more security and my community may be strengthened a bit in terms of our local economy." Why wouldn't somebody think that's probably a good-news story? But it's these very corporations that receive billions of dollars in further tax cuts, which are being paid for on the backs of the middle class, as well as those in poverty and the working poor. Whether they're on social assistance or the working poor, poor is poor. That's what you deem to be the biggest priority. In the biggest economic boom we've ever seen in North America, you've decided that groups that make \$7.6 billion in one quarter, 173 of them, need billions of dollars of help.

First of all, you took away 22% of the income of those who are on social assistance, and the working poor are at \$6.85 an hour, after we see the United States surpass us in their minimum wage. Most of us grew up with a very different world. When people find out that the US minimum wage is higher than ours, it shakes them. It shakes their reality, because it changes what they thought was the geopolitical world in North America that they knew. You chose to do nothing for them. How can you justify that?

For every dollar you gave in a tax cut, you put a penny in health care. Education has been slashed. Tuition fees are leaving young people, those who are probably not, I would argue, from \$330,000-a-year-income families, with about \$25,000 in debt that they start their working lives with, or have to accept that prior to going to university. You've done nothing about that. Yet you all want to stand up and brag that this is nothing but a good-news budget, that everybody ought to be happy and that all of us in the opposition who are opposing it are only doing it, at best, because our oath is to be the loyal opposition.

Some 27% of the new income tax breaks go to just the top 5% of income earners in this province. Some 27% of the new income tax cuts go to 5% of the population. That 5% of the population, their share of all this is about \$730 million; not bad, when you didn't have to do a thing for it—absolutely nothing.

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Now, we've heard some members of the government talk about the fact that, "Yes, well, we gave out that 200 bucks. How about that, eh? We gave out that 200 bucks. Wasn't that something?" It was something, all right. Do you know what happened in my constituency office and in my colleagues' constituency offices, and I can't see why it wouldn't apply across the whole House? We had people in droves calling up wanting to know where their 200 bucks was. Do you know who the majority of those folks were? Ontarians who aren't going to get a \$200 cheque or any part thereof. Do you know why they'd phone? Because \$200 to them might mean the difference between Christmas presents or not, and they didn't share in this. By the way, it's about 25% of the population; 25% of the population got nothing. The answer we get from the government when we raise it is, "It's for those who pay taxes. If you didn't pay taxes, why would you get the \$200?" The problem with that thinking is that it doesn't take in the next step, and that next step is, where did you get the billion dollars in the first place? You got the billion dollars by cutting public services.

I talked about tax expenditures in an earlier two-minute response. Your tax expenditures, yes, in part are paid for in growth in the economy, but given the amount, the total billions that you've cut out of Ontario's finances and given largely to the very wealthy and to corporations that are making more money than they've ever made, it comes from cutting public services. Who needs public services the most? Usually, the lower the personal and family income, the more they need public services. Why? Because they don't have the financial means to purchase

them on their own, which is why the Alliance and the Mike Harris Tories are so in favour of and so enamoured with a two-tier health care system. They try to argue it in economics, but the reality is they want to free up public money so they've got more room to cut taxes because they know—"they" being the very wealthy—that they win a lot more money. Disproportionately, they receive a higher percentage of the money. Then when it comes to health care, they've got the funds and the means to purchase that private care. The hope is that it's money that—and you're helping them, by the way, with more tax cuts, 10 grand a year. Not bad. That's just one year. These are people who have already benefited to the tune of tens of thousands of dollars from your previous tax cuts. So they've got the money, the disposable income, to not only purchase the private health care, but because you're bleeding away funding to the public health care system, they are probably going to get it quicker and with the latest technology, the latest medicine, and probably the most highly trained individuals. At least a lot of them will be there.

It's not as if people who think that way do so, in my opinion, from a philosophical base. It's a matter of saying, "How do I want to arrange the world so that I can benefit the most?" which again I don't say is thinking limited to just those who have money, but as the whole dog-eat-dog, bare-knuckle capitalism takes hold, that reality has a lot to do with the kind of politics we have.

Let me also just say parenthetically that because I think this way—and I know there are members across the way who obviously do not, but I do think this way. When I see the historic level of turnout in the last federal election, we know that when there is a lower turnout, it's those who, as you go down the socio-economic scale—meaning those who have lower income, lower education—are likely to be the ones who decided not to vote. Governments know this. Therefore, you don't need to worry as much politically, do you, about what the poor might do, or the middle class, because a lot of them aren't going to come out and vote.

But you also know and we all know that the higher the income and the higher the education level, the more likely an individual is to go out and cast that ballot, and if you're framing everything toward them and their world, why is it not reasonable to expect people would vote for that? The fly in the ointment is that during a boom time you can cover all of this—because quite frankly there's enough money splashing around out there in the economy to paper over a lot of this—but where it's really going to show itself is when the downturn comes. Is that going to be next year, the year after, five years from now? No one knows, but I would love to see a minister of the crown of this government stand in his or her place and give us an assurance that it's not going to happen.

I see the gloves on there, Sergeant. Does that mean that I'm getting close? I see the Speaker telling me three minutes. That's probably stretching it.

Let me just say that what I want to do in the remaining time when next this bill is called is talk about the kind of Ontario that I think we will see when that recession hits,

the people it's going to impact and the way our communities are going to look versus the way that they would before the revolution took hold. Let me assure you that they are two very, very different worlds, and if we see a lot of disparity in what I've mentioned this evening, from those who are in \$330,000 to those who earn \$6.85 an hour, wait until we take a look at what a recessionary Ontario economy looks like in terms of how it would apply to the majority of my constituents in Hamilton West versus those that you have so adequately taken care of in the first years of your time in government, the very wealthy.

The result is quite frightening, but it needs to be said and it needs to be pointed out that this is the world that

they have created and there are going to be winners and losers, but there are going to be a lot bigger winners and bigger losers when we get into the tough times. The strain and cracks that this government has put in place are going to widen to the point where—and I'm not trying to be over the top—a lot of nightmare scenarios are going to come true for far too many Ontarians.

With that, I will sit down and speak next time we call this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned till 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2128.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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**Journal
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(Hansard)**

Wednesday 13 December 2000

Mercredi 13 décembre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 13 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 13 décembre 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I don't think anyone in this Legislature would argue that one of the most pressing issues we are facing in northern Ontario at this time is the increasing physician shortage crisis. In my hometown of Thunder Bay, as many as 20,000 people are without a family doctor right now, a reality that is both frightening and intolerable. I get calls every day from people desperate to access a family doctor.

That is why it was disturbing to hear yesterday that a provincial plan designed to ease the doctor shortage, which we expected would be made public by now, may be delayed a few more months.

If anything, this only makes it all the more important that the Premier and the Minister of Health put their support behind the establishment of a northern and rural medical school. The issue of physician recruitment and retention has been one we have grappled with for decades now. What is becoming very clear is that a northern medical school may truly prove to be a long-term solution for a problem for which we must find a solution.

Experts in the field such as Dr James Rourke, the director of rural medicine at the University of Western Ontario, tell us that the location of medical training is a major determinant of where new doctors will eventually set up practice and that we can expect more than 50% of those graduates will ultimately end up practising in northern or rural areas.

A great deal of work has been done by many people over the last year to see that a northern and rural medical school comes to fruition. Today I ask the Premier and the Minister of Health to get on board and support this exciting initiative. Everyone in this province should have a family doctor, Premier. Perhaps it can happen with your support today.

EVENTS IN DURHAM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm very pleased to stand in the House today and talk about the many positive events taking place in my riding of Durham. For

instance, last Thursday, December 7, one of the municipality of Clarington's most active community organizations, the Clarington Older Adult Centre, was the recipient of a community grant from the Trillium Foundation. The Durham, Haliburton, Kawartha and Pine Ridge division of the foundation presented the cheque in the amount of \$75,000 over three years.

This allowed the organization to hire a program co-ordinator, Laura McDonald, to support the development and implementation of physical and social programs and information seminars as well as activities for seniors in Clarington.

Representing the Trillium Foundation at the ceremony was David Cook, who presented the cheque to the association's executive director, John Coffey. Also present were the mayor of Clarington, John Mutton, the president of the Older Adults Association board of directors, Don Welsh, and board members Joan and Glen Prout.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to personally thank the Clarington Older Adult Association, their staff and many, many volunteers like Annabelle Sissons and Mavis Carleton, who have put a lot of time and energy into making this a very successful, volunteer-based community organization. It's organizations like this that make Clarington, in my riding of Durham, a great place to live, to work and to raise a family.

HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): The most successful social housing is non-profit co-operative housing. Today it is in jeopardy. As you know, co-op housing is a mix of low and middle-income families housed together in the same community, giving everyone a sense of pride and ownership. Furthermore, it provides them a sense of self-governance because of the rules and regulations that they themselves develop. Co-op residents themselves are responsible for setting and enforcing rents and charges for their accommodation.

All these principles of co-op housing have been under attack for years. Most importantly, the fact that some governments do not appear to understand the difference between co-ops and other forms of social housing makes the issue more complex. They don't appear to understand that co-ops are self-governing. This separates co-ops from other non-profit housing providers.

As long as co-ops properly manage their own projects within the financial parameters of the operating agreements which govern their financial relationship with the

province, it would appear that the co-ops are free to manage themselves. However, there are many other variables that now adversely affect their ability to do so. What has happened over the last several years is that the tightening of financial parameters is evident. The withdrawing of funds from the co-ops and requiring co-ops to make up financial differences from their resources has put an upward pressure on rents to be charged for the co-ops to such an extent that availability to those in need of affordable housing is just too expensive. Rather than housing needy families and individuals, they sit empty.

The financial crisis here is evident. We want the government to address their concern. I have spoken to the minister, who allowed me to say that he will co-operate with me to address this problem.

HOLIDAY DISPLAYS

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): There is a Christmas attraction in Northumberland that brings people in by the busload. Several communities in my riding decorate their town halls and historic buildings with dazzling lights, creating a sea of colour and beauty.

Every year, the town of Campbellford-Seymour has its Showcase of Lights. More than 100 displays are erected on Old Mill Park and along the historic Trent Canal. Many of these are animated. This year, several businesses in the community have also taken part by placing extravagant displays on their property and buildings.

Other communities in Northumberland show their holiday spirit as well. Cobourg's is Christmas Magic, which includes a massive display of lights in the park, as well as bringing historic Victoria Hall to life with a festive light display. Brighton also decorates its community with many colourful lights, while Port Hope complements its historic architecture with thousands of them.

While I congratulate these communities, I also commend this government for its support through the Ontario rural jobs strategy fund. This program is providing more than \$1.6 million to Northumberland's economic renewal initiative to help promote Northumberland as a tourist destination. This, of course, includes the Northumberland lights.

I take this opportunity to encourage everyone to come and visit Northumberland and enjoy the displays, the surroundings and the wonderful seasonal hospitality.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I rise today to raise grave concerns about this government's lack of commitment to community-based mental health care. As the Harris government continues to rush to close down psych hospitals, you have failed to put the adequate community supports in place.

The Minister of Health continues to promise that not one hospital bed will close until proper community supports are in place. Assertive community treatment teams are slowly being put in place across this province. The

move away from institutional care is commendable, but the ministry must commit necessary dollars to provide true community-based care.

Unfortunately, community-based care is being sacrificed in the interest of cost-cutting. In October of this year, all call-backs for community health care program workers have ceased. If a psychiatric patient experiences a crisis, they cannot contact their worker. They must, and I am quoting here from a Ministry of Health letter dated October 6, 2000, "call the ... hospital switchboard and be transferred to the officer in charge. It is acknowledged that these individuals may not be familiar with the individual resident...."

This hypocrisy is outstanding. Either this government wants community-based mental health or they don't. They cannot have it both ways. As we move away from institutionalized care, we have to respect the trust and care relationship developed between patients and workers. You cannot say that we only want services in the community when it is convenient or not too costly just because we don't want to pay overtime. Caring for the most vulnerable in our society requires putting people first, not policy, not budgets. Elizabeth Witmer, listen, please.

1340

OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Last Friday, I held a news conference with representatives from the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Save the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Conservation Council of Ontario, Save the Rouge and Earthroots to talk about the need for public hearings on the NDP's Bill 71, the Oak Ridges Moraine Green Planning Act.

This is what the Federation of Ontario Naturalists had to say: "There needs to be open public discussion about the various options for how best to protect the Oak Ridges moraine's natural features and water resources from unchecked urban sprawl. An opportunity for such discussion now presents itself in Bill 71, the Oak Ridges Moraine Green Planning Act."

Save the Oak Ridges Moraine said something similar, as did the Conservation Council of Ontario and others.

The public is saying, loud and clear, that this government should hold public hearings on Bill 71. They must take place, and they must take place now. In fact, in order to avoid having to deal with Bill 71, the government spent six days on something called the Motorized Snow Vehicles Amendment Act.

Interjection: In committee.

Ms Churley: In committee, six days.

In the meantime, this bill, the Oak Ridges moraine bill, has been kicking around for six months. There is no excuse not to put it on. The agenda for the general government committee is open for next week, before this House probably prorogues.

I call on the public to call Mike Harris's office—the number is 416-325-1941—and urge the Premier to put the Oak Ridges moraine bill on the agenda next week.

HANUKKAH

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): Starting next week, on December 22, Jews all over the world will celebrate Hanukkah, the festival of lights. Hanukkah commemorates the victory of a group of Jews against the Syrian army. This victory was notable because the army was so horribly outnumbered that few could imagine them being victorious. This is the true miracle of Hanukkah, that a small group of Jews could resoundingly defeat a technologically and numerically superior Syrian army.

The second, and the more commonly acknowledged miracle, came after the fighting. As the Jews were cleaning the holy temple, they found that there only remained enough oil to burn for one day. This was a major problem, as more oil wouldn't be available for temple use for eight days. The Jews started burning the holy oil and prayed for a miracle, and another miracle did arrive. The oil that should have lasted for one day lasted for eight.

In commemoration of this Hanukkah miracle, the holiday lasts eight days. Each day of the celebration is marked by the addition of one extra candle in the menorah, a candelabra placed in Jewish windows and homes all over the world to mark this festival. Jewish children play with dreidels, small tops inscribed with the letters for the Hebrew words meaning "a great miracle happened there."

As people from all over the province gather to celebrate their winter holidays, including Christmas and Diwali, I take this opportunity to wish Ontario Jews, particularly those from Thornhill, a very happy and healthy Hanukkah. Chag Sameach.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): It was only 10 days ago that the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission board decided to break up the transportation and communications agency that has served the economy of northeastern Ontario for the past 86 years. Since then, I've twice asked the Minister of Northern Development and Mines in this House to meet with the business and municipal leaders of northeastern Ontario before he proceeded with any recommendation.

On behalf of the residents of northeastern Ontario, I have asked for the consultant's report to be released and for a series of public hearings in communities along the rail corridor before any decision was made.

Under the Harris government's direction, the ONTC board has arbitrarily decided to break up and sell off most of the transportation and telecommunication businesses that have opened up northeastern Ontario. Now the minister, two days before he was planning to meet the Northeastern Ontario Mayors Action Group, with the

board chair, has given the go-ahead to divest most of these businesses.

This is another example of the arrogance and total disdain the Harris government has for the residents of northern Ontario. This is another nail in the coffin of our economy.

This is typical of the arbitrary nature of this government, that you don't listen to the people, you try to run this whole thing as a business, and you don't consult with the people. There was still a democracy in this place the last time I looked. You don't treat this province as a democracy. It's about time you did. You're going to rue that day when the next election comes.

OPPOSITION PARTIES

Mr David Young (Willowdale):

'Twas the end of the session,
and all through the House,
The vote bells were ringing—
the members wanted out.
The Liberals had hung
their stockings with care,
In hopes that some policies
soon would be there.

The Dippers were seated
behind their nine desks,
While tax-and-spend visions
danced in their heads.
While past NDPers taxed dirt
and the weather,
Us Tories balanced the budget
in springtime together.

When up in the gallery
there arose such a bustle,
I craned my neck upward
to see what the fuss was.
The Grits and the Dippers
must have thought they were dreaming,
"Keep cutting our taxes!"
the people were screaming.

"Keep reforming our health care, our welfare—
cut crime,
"Make our young offenders
serve all of their time.
"Stand fast, Mr Harris,
you're on the right track,
"Ontario's much better,
we're not going back!"

"Point of order," screamed Dalton,
"this just isn't fair!"
"I want to be Premier,
and sit over there."
The Speaker stood up and said,
"Government members, stop laughing,

"I'm the boss of this place
and must prevent that from happening."

"But really," said Dalton,

"I really can lead,

"I've got positions on everything,
usually two, sometimes three."

Then the Premier stood up,
and the other shoe dropped.

"Dalton, you'll not have my job,
because you flip-flop."

The Premier turned to the gallery
and stated quite clearly,

"This government believes in its plan
quite sincerely.

"We'll continue reform,
spend on health care and kids,
And I know you'll be proud
of all that we did."

To conclude this brief speech,
I look forward to being able to say
We'll be back in the spring.
Enjoy the holiday!

MINISTRIES' WEB SITES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): On Monday, December 5, 2000, the member for Windsor-St Clair rose on a question of privilege in order to express his concern about information on a government Web site. In particular, the member was of the view that a press release on the Web site of the Ministry of Community and Social Services was partisan political propaganda that should not be funded by his constituents or by other taxpayers, and that the press release was also delivered to members by way of the legislative mail service instead of being mailed by the caucus.

The next day the member rose, also on a question of privilege, to indicate that the Web site of the Office of the Premier, as well as the Internet communications of the Minister of Labour, also contained partisan material. The member was of the view that the material was a violation of section 28 of the Public Service Act, that the government was trying to intimidate the opposition with taxpayer dollars, and that the material violated not only the privileges of members, particularly the Leader of the Opposition, but those of the people of Ontario. The government House leader also made a submission.

I've had an opportunity to review the member's supporting documentation, and I will address all points.

First, with respect to the allegation that members are being intimidated, the fact that the government Web site contains information that members object to does not in itself establish a *prima facie* case of privilege; some of the material may well be partisan in nature, but none of it suggests to me that the members are being intimidated in a manner that constitutes a breach of privilege.

Secondly, as members well know from previous rulings on the subject, it is for the courts, not the Speaker, to interpret laws like the Public Service Act, although I'm sure the Chair of Management Board will take the appropriate steps to deal with the allegations.

Thirdly, the right of members to government information is limited to what the standing orders provide. The standing orders do not provide members with the right to information, reliable or otherwise, from a government Web site.

Fourthly, as to the distribution of partisan material via the legislative mail service, I am more concerned with the content of the material than with the method of delivery.

And finally, members will know that there are many rulings to the effect that the Speaker cannot prevent the government from communicating an allegedly partisan political message using political funds.

However, I would not want to leave the impression that I am untroubled by what I read in the material submitted by the member for Windsor-St Clair. I note that previous Speakers have expressed concern about government communication. For example, on January 22, 1997, Speaker Stockwell stated, and I quote,

"At this point in my ruling, I want to express some personal concerns about the propriety of public funds being used to advocate, through advertising, a particular position on a matter that is before the House. Let me be clear," and that again is Speaker Stockwell speaking, "I am not speaking here about politically paid-for advertising, but rather about funds that are contributed to by every Ontarian, regardless of his or her political view.

"Personally, I would find it offensive if taxpayer dollars were being used to convey a political or partisan message. There is nothing wrong with members debating an issue and influencing public opinion; in fact, it is part of our parliamentary tradition to do so. But I feel that it is wrong for a government to attempt to influence public opinion through advertising that is paid for with public funds—which, I might add, are not available to the opposition—instead of through debate in the House."

1350

My own personal concern about the information is quite simple and perhaps I am being too obvious, but I'd like to state it. Publicly funded Web sites, as opposed to politically funded Web sites, should be used to communicate with the public in a fair, reasonable and meaningful way. A line is crossed when a government uses a Web site or, for that matter, any publicly funded mechanism as a vehicle to launch a provocative attack on any member of this House.

And so, while I find a *prima facie* case of privilege has not been made out, in my view this is an inappropriate use of government Web sites, and I hope that all members clearly understand the difference between what is publicly funded and what is politically funded communication, and that they will use each accordingly when they communicate to Ontarians.

I'd like to thank the member for Windsor-St Clair and the government House leader for their submissions on this matter.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): I heard your ruling with regard to there not being a formal breach of privilege. I do want to apologize on behalf of those ministers who had Web sites which appeared to be politically motivated press releases which were reproduced on those Web sites.

This will not happen in the future. We agree with your synopsis with regard to the use of this kind of material. It should be on our party Web site and it should not be on our provincial ministry Web sites.

The Speaker: I sincerely thank the government House leader for that.

VISITORS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I beg your indulgence and the indulgence of the House. I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce four of my six sisters who are visiting today: Catherine Stephenson, Jane Goodman, Ruth Ciraulo and Monica Audia. I'd like you to join in me welcoming them.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We're very pleased to have members of the family. I'm sure the member's performance today will be something that's very honourable for all of the family here to watch.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I beg leave to present a report on provincial highway maintenance from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Gerretsen: This is the last of six reports that the public accounts committee has presented, based on the 1999 Annual Report of the Provincial Auditor.

I would like to start off by thanking the staff who have worked on it, both Erik Peters's staff and Erik Peters himself, the clerk and the clerk's office staff and of course the legislative researcher for the work they've done for the committee this past year.

The current report had eight recommendations in it, and if I could just highlight two of them: it recommends that the Ministry of Transportation should report on its province-wide highway assessment to determine whether the maintenance program is meeting its goal of preserving and prolonging the life of the provincial highway network; and also, that the Ministry of Transportation

should report to the committee on its highway monitoring activities and their effectiveness in ensuring that minimum standards of highway safety and contractor performance expectations are achieved; and finally, that the ministry should report to the committee on the overall highway maintenance costs for the last two fiscal years, including the reductions in overhead achieved through outsourcing.

We hope that the ministry will take these recommendations and implement them as soon as possible.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Brian Coburn (Ottawa-Orléans): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill Pr33, An Act respecting Idlewyld Manor.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

DEFERRED VOTES

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We now have a deferred vote on the motion to extend the House sitting until Thursday, December 21, 2000.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1356 to 1401.

The Speaker: Would the members take their seats for the vote, please.

Mr Baird has moved government order number 10. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Beaubien, Marcel
Bisson, Gilles
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Caplan, David
Christopherson, David
Chudleigh, Ted
Churley, Marilyn
Clark, Brad
Cleary, John C.
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Colle, Mike

Galt, Doug
Gerretsen, John
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Gravelle, Michael
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael D.
Hastings, John
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Kennedy, Gerard
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Lankin, Frances
Levac, David

Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Ramsay, David
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George
Snobelen, John
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.

Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Cunningham, Dianne
Curling, Alvin
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim

Marchese, Rosario
Mariand, Margaret
Martel, Shelley
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McGuinty, Dalton
McLeod, Lyn
McMeekin, Ted

Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Kormos, Peter

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 83; the nays are 1.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I request unanimous consent to reconsider the time allocation motion regarding the Employment Standards Act, Bill 147. Today we've just been tabled the amendments from the government. They constitute 24 pages, in addition to the 88 pages of the bill itself, and we have effectively one hour this afternoon to deal with this. It is totally impossible. I seek unanimous consent to reconsider the time allocation motion and allow us substantive time at the committee level to do the job that needs to be done on this bill.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ALLEGED SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. In the early 1990s, there was talk of a pedophile ring in Cornwall, so in 1992 the Cornwall police conducted an investigation. No evidence was turned up and no charges were laid. Talk persisted on the street, so in 1994 the OPP conducted an investigation. No evidence was found and no charges were laid.

As you are well aware, Premier, a citizens' committee went to work and collected evidence. They turned that evidence over to the OPP, and subsequently 115 charges were laid against 15 people. There are allegedly close to 50 victims. Some were as young as 12 years of age at the time, victims of some very terrible and horrific sexual assaults.

Premier, the people of Cornwall and the victims in particular and their families want justice in this matter. Your colleague Garry Guzzo has put forward the solution: Bill 103. He believes, as I believe, as this House believes, that we should hold a commission of inquiry. Garry Guzzo tells us the only reason we're not moving forward on this is because you are blocking it. Premier,

why do you feel that the people of Cornwall and the victims of this abuse are not entitled to justice?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Attorney General can respond to this.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): It is the opinion of counsel involved in the prosecution of the pending cases, and there may be further cases, that there would be potential prejudice to those court proceedings were some other proceeding, such as a commission of inquiry, to take place at this time. I said so in the Legislature some weeks ago when Bill 103 was debated.

As the Leader of the Opposition knows, there are prosecutions underway. There has been a very substantial commitment of resources by the Ontario Provincial Police through Project Truth. That investigation is for the most part complete, although there may be other matters for the OPP, I'm advised, to look into, and there is the possibility of further charges.

Mr McGuinty: You'll be very much aware of the precedents in Mount Cashel and Westray and even, in our province, in the case of Walkerton, all cases where independent inquiries were conducted at the same time as criminal investigations and proceedings were underway. What you're offering is an excuse.

You must have seen the statement of claim that was issued against this government on behalf of 12 men who were victimized as boys, some as young as 12. The statement of claim describes the sexual assaults in sickening detail. They also tell us that their lives were devastated as a result.

Minister and Premier, this should not be a partisan issue. I think we all understand what is the right thing to do under these circumstances. Listen to your own colleague. I had the privilege of appearing before Judge Guzzo when he was sitting on the bench and I can tell you, regardless of what you may think of him, that he is a passionate defender of the interests of children. He has put forward a very important solution to this matter which hangs like a cloud over the community of Cornwall.

Minister, why is it that we can't proceed with the passage of his bill? Why is it that we can't proceed with a commission of inquiry into this matter which hangs over the community of Cornwall?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I'm sure the member opposite, who is a lawyer, knows that it would be inappropriate for us as a government to take action that would potentially interfere or prejudice or in some way jeopardize criminal prosecutions arising out of very serious events that are alleged to have taken place in the Cornwall area over the course of some years. Very substantial police resources have been committed to this investigation for some years, and I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition would not wish to have any of that effort jeopardized by any steps being taken which would potentially interfere with the administration of justice, with the prosecution of persons who have been charged or may be charged arising out of these events.

In terms of other inquiries, as he knows or should know, the terms of reference, for example, in the Walkerton inquiry, provide for the potential of a criminal proceeding—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the Attorney General's time is up.

1410

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you are continuing to make excuses. We can tailor this commission of inquiry so that it doesn't in any way unduly prejudice any criminal investigations. That can all be done. It has been done in Newfoundland, it has been done in Nova Scotia and we're doing it at this very time in our own province.

Mr Guzzo tells us that the government has vital evidence you won't release. In his letter to you he says, "Why should our government feel that we could keep this type of evidence from ... any citizen of this province?" He goes on to add, "One might also ask why it is necessary for alleged victims, such as the ones in this most recent lawsuit, to be forced to go to the expense and the difficulty of bringing forward a claim such as this when the method suggested in Bill 103 would have been less cumbersome and less complicated and less expensive to the government as well as to the plaintiffs herein."

My question is, why can't we just end this cover-up? Why can't we go ahead with a commission of inquiry, understanding that we can tailor it so it doesn't unduly prejudice criminal investigations? Do we not owe that at a minimum to the victims and the people of Cornwall?

Hon Mr Flaherty: Just to be clear, there are no charges pending in the Walkerton situation. Were that to eventuate, that situation would have to be addressed by the commissioner pursuant to the terms of reference in the Walkerton inquiry.

The Leader of the Opposition suggests that I, as Attorney General, ignore the advice I'm getting from the crown prosecutors and those responsible for the administration of criminal justice in the crown's office. I'm not going to do that. I accept their advice. I made it clear when I spoke to Bill 103 in this House precisely what the government's position is, based on the criminal prosecutions that are ongoing, and that is in Hansard for the Leader of the Opposition to read. I'm sure the last thing the people in Cornwall want would be to have criminal prosecutions thrown out because of actions taken by politicians.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Through your changes to the Employment Standards Act, you are about to impose some dramatic changes in lifestyle for five million non-unionized Ontarians and their children. Tell me, why is it you are afraid to conduct public committee hearings looking into your bill?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Previous to this bill being drafted, the Ministry of Labour and myself issued a white paper. The white paper was a

very complete and comprehensive package that talked about exactly what would be in the legislation and asked for comments. Subsequent to releasing that—it was out for a month or two months—we then went on a tour and held public consultations in about six or seven cities and met with everyone who requested to be met with. We met with the unions, the labour leaders, the authorities, the legal clinics, with all of them. As the culmination of that work, we drafted the Employment Standards Act, revised. We introduced it in this House with those comments that were put in.

As far as the public consultation process is concerned, it was also done two years ago by the then Minister of Labour, Elizabeth Witmer. On this public consultation process, we have been very open and very public, and very interested in hearing from the public. I think we've done a very good job of that.

Mr McGuinty: This Legislature has not had the opportunity to listen to people comment on your specific bill. Listen to what somebody said in this Legislature back in 1994 in the context of a debate on a labour bill:

"Opportunities for people like yourself to come forward and tell a government what you think about a piece of legislation weren't there.

"What's democratic about that? What's fair about that? Why is it you say to me this is a fair process to go through, it's equal and upfront, when people in this province don't get a chance to tell you what they think? What is more fundamentally democratic than that?"

Do you know who said that? One Chris Stockwell. There was the grand lover of democratic principles, the man who was most righteous and indignant when he stood on this side of the House.

What happened, Minister? Why is it that you no longer hold the principles of democracy in such high regard?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Quite candidly, the piece of legislation the leader of the official opposition is talking about wasn't canvassed like this bill was. We didn't travel the province. We didn't go to London, we didn't go to Windsor, we didn't go to Sudbury, we didn't go to Thunder Bay, we didn't go to Ottawa, we didn't sit in Toronto, we didn't go to Sarnia and we didn't go to Oshawa. We didn't go to those places when we were talking about that bill. With this bill, we did talk about it.

As far as the members opposite having the opportunity to sit in and hear these concerns, an invitation was given to all members of this House. The NDP took advantage of that on occasion. Your caucus didn't. Don't ask me to explain why they chose to ignore them, because the public certainly didn't.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. We're not going to have shouting across. The Minister of Labour has it.

Minister of Labour. Sorry.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Other than the member from Windsor-Essex, there wasn't another Liberal who decided to show up.

All I can tell you is that we had the public hearings; we did our job. On the bill you speak about there wasn't any public consultation. I see a very serious difference in the two.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, stop thrashing about. You drown faster when you do so much thrashing.

If you don't want to listen to what you said in the past, if you won't take your own advice, then listen to what one Michael Harris said back in 1994: "One of the fundamental rights of those who are affected by legislation is to have the matter referred to a committee and to have hearings so you can hear from those affected by it."

Minister, do you know what I think? I think you are afraid to shine the light of day on your own bill. You're afraid to take it around the province. You're afraid to allow people inside this precinct to take a close look at your bill, which is going to mean longer hours and less pay. That's what it's all about. I think you're afraid. You're ashamed of your own bill. Prove me wrong, Minister. You prove me wrong and hold public committee hearings.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I don't take a lot of advice from the member opposite, but I will take the advice on how not to drown so quickly, that's for certain, because if there's one guy who thrashes about and drowns, it's got to be you.

Second, I'm not ashamed of this bill. I'm proud of this bill. I took—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We need to hear. Minister of Labour.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I'm proud of this bill. Simply put, we carried this bill across the province to seven separate cities. I met with the union leaders, I met with the executives in that—

Interjections.

The Speaker: It's getting toward the end of the week. I hate to do it but I'm going to have to start warning people. It is getting too noisy. I allow a little bit of it, but we get carried away, as usual. We push it a little bit too far. I'm going to start to warn people.

The Minister of Labour. Sorry.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Simply put, this bill was out in a white paper. We addressed these issues in seven or eight cities. We also went out after and discussed it in public forums. We talked about this bill.

I have no shame. This is a good piece of legislation—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

Stop the clock. A point of privilege.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On a point of privilege, Speaker: Just to correct the record, I did attend the hearings in Thunder Bay, although I was not invited.

The Speaker: This is not a point of privilege.

1420

OVERTIME

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. If workers in Ontario weren't already shocked by your new employment standards law they will be today, when they learn you're adding a further clause which would have the effect of locking them into a situation where they could not get overtime pay for overtime hours worked if they sign a document saying they agree to average their overtime. This new clause would mean that a new worker, on his first day on the job, could be pressured into signing an agreement to average their overtime, and then later, when they realized they're being screwed out of thousands of dollars of overtime pay, they would find out they can't change anything with respect to that for two years. In other words, it locks them in for two years.

It's pretty easy to understand that the people who will be affected by this are people who, for example, only speak English as a second language, people who are not represented by a union in any way, people who are new in the workforce. Premier, how can you justify putting in a clause that would essentially screw new workers out of thousands of dollars of overtime in their first two years on the job? How do you justify that?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I could never justify that. That's why it won't happen.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Further to the Premier, I would suggest there's maybe a lack of communication between you and the Minister of Labour, because that very clause is exactly what was in the list of amendments that were tabled with us, just this morning, I might add, and will become law within a matter of days. The fact of the matter is that according to your amendment, once such a document is signed it runs for up to two years, and the only way an employee can get out of this new formula that denies them overtime pay they otherwise would have been entitled to is if the employer agrees. So the fact is they're locked in for two years. We ask you again, Premier, how can you justify having workers sign off their right to overtime for up to two years and can only be let out of it if their employer agrees?

Hon Mr Harris: I think that's a silly suggestion and we're not going to follow it.

Mr Christopherson: We'll see what happens at committee this afternoon. We've got the Hansard of the Premier's remarks, and tomorrow may be a very different day in terms of the question and answer on that issue.

I want to ask you further about an amendment we proposed that's going forward this afternoon. Basically it would have put into law all this protection that you and your Minister of Labour say people have in terms of saying no to 60 hours and no to averaging the overtime whereby they would lose the overtime. We put in a clause that explained very carefully that it would indeed

be a violation of the law to coerce someone, and we spell out very specifically those areas where the coercion can take place.

I'm informed by the minister that you've chosen not to include that. Premier, my question to you is: how can you stand in this place and say that workers have the right to say no, and yet when it comes time to put it in the law, the only place it really matters, you refuse? How do you justify that?

Hon Mr Harris: I think if you show up at the committee hearing today the minister will explain the bill and how it works.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Premier. Your government today announced what is basically the ultimate demise of the Northlander train service in northeastern Ontario. You announced today a two-phase plan. The first part is that you're going to move on privatizing those money-making sections of the ONTC that helped to pay for services such as the Northlander.

In your press release you say you're going to explore, under the second part of your plan, which is going to take place this spring, alternative delivery of the Northlander, the Little Bear and the Polar Bear Express rail services. Why don't you admit it? You have already made up your mind that you're going to get rid of the Northlander. Why don't you, for once, stand up in this House and tell us exactly what you're up to when it comes to the Northlander rail service, and stop playing games with the people of northeastern Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'm sure the minister will want to respond and I will let him through supplementary questions, but let me say something that's very different from the way you acted in government with transportation and the ONTC in northern Ontario than the way we acted. We allowed and approved a commission request to have a study, called the service improvement study, to see if we could improve the quality of service provided to the people of northeastern Ontario.

Let me tell you what your record is with the ONTC. In 1990 you reduced the subsidy of the ONTC from \$22 million to \$15.8 million. In 1994 you reduced the level of bus service, without providing any alternative, from Timmins to Chapleau and Wawa. These were cancelled, you said, to save money. Star Transfer, the trucking arm of the ONTC, was eliminated by the NDP in 1993 as a cost-saving measure. The new ferry was docked by the NDP in 1993 as a cost-saving measure. You cut the norOntair service to six communities as a cost-cutting measure.

What we have clearly indicated is we're interested in improving service. We have committed—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Premier's time is up.

Mr Bisson: Clearly, what the leader of the government was talking about was the Tory agenda. You're the ones that got rid of the subsidies to the ONR. You're the ones that got rid of the norOntair across northeastern Ontario, where communities are now without any air service whatsoever. That's the legacy of the Mike Harris government.

It's exactly for those reasons that we're saying to you, as northerners, you have to invest in the Northlander, you have to invest within the Ontario Northland, to make sure that it remains a viable service for people of northeastern Ontario.

Every government before you, including the NDP, had faith in the ONR, invested and made sure that those services were in place for people in northeastern Ontario. I'm asking you again, Premier: will you do the same, especially as a person who lives in North Bay, whose people work at that commission and who is supposed to represent northern Ontario?

Hon Mr Harris: I think you are aware that the minister made an announcement in North Bay today aimed at how we improve service to northern Ontario. Perhaps you could explain to me how the NDP government, going from \$22 million in 1990 to \$15.8 million in 1994, could slash and cut that money out of the ONTC budget. How did that improve services to northern Ontario? I wonder if you could tell me how reducing the level of bus service with no alternative from Timmins to Chapleau and Wawa helped the people of northern Ontario. I wonder if you could tell me how cutting out Star Transfer helped the people of northern Ontario. This was the record of your government.

We have clearly indicated that we are interested in improving service. To that extent, we have had a consultant give us advice. The minister reacted to that and responded. We are interested, not in saving money but in how we can improve service to those people in northern Ontario.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I have a question today for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In regard to the ONTC, it was only 10 days ago that the commission had decided to divest most of the operating businesses that make up the commission. Twice in this House I've asked the minister to consult with the business and the municipal leaders of northeastern Ontario before he makes any decision about our telecommunications and transportation agency in the north.

On behalf of the residents of northern Ontario, I also asked the minister to release the consultant's study and to make sure that he carries on some public hearings in the communities along the rail corridor. But today the minister has arbitrarily made the decision, two days before the chair of the ONTC was to meet with the northeastern mayors' action group about this, to get rid of this agency, to divest most of the assets in it and basically to put a big hole in the economy of northeastern Ontario. Minister, why are you acting in this arbitrary manner and not talking to the people who are shareholders of this agency?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I'm very pleased to respond to the member from Timiskaming on his question. As members of this House well know, this issue has been studied time and time again. In fact, in my tenure as minister, this is the second study in 18 months, among seven or eight in the past few years alone. It's time for action, to move forward, to help improve services in northeastern Ontario, whether that's rail, bus, ferries or telecommunications.

In my 18 months as minister alone, I've had many conversations with mayors, with the union representatives, with the board members, with the member opposite himself. I'll read you one of the lines from the consultations in the responses we've had: "I've proposed a casino in the train—snowmobile cars, and to really get back to the idea of providing ... a northern adventure. We have the mechanism here. It probably should be run by the private sector." That's from the member from Timiskaming before the cabinet committee, so we are pleased to take his advice in our recommendations brought forward today.

1430

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): To the same minister: as the minister would be aware, the Chi-Cheemaun service from Tobermory to South Baymouth is critical to the people I represent. In the ONTC announcement, the minister suggests this will be a spin-off corporation. I'm here to ask the minister a couple of things.

Seeing as the minister, without any advice from the people of Manitoulin or Tobermory or the Bruce Peninsula, saw fit to sell the Nindawayma, the second ship on that run, and seeing as the minister in his service improvement plan has not indicated in any way that the plan will actually improve services, would the minister commit to allowing the governance of this to have a large number of residents of the district of Manitoulin on the Owen Sound Transportation Commission board, and would the minister commit that all ferry services will be improved?

Hon Mr Hudak: That was the goal of this service improvement strategy: to look at the array of services and determine how we can improve the value customers are getting in that area. I think the member should be very pleased. The decision announced today was to separate the marine ferry services from the general corporation so it can specialize and be more independent and provide better services to the area. We're going to have the Owen Sound Transportation Commission in the Owen Sound area. I've asked them to consult with residents of the area to determine how best to improve services, and to get local residents involved in making that a better service.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is to the Minister of the Environment.

When your colleague the Minister of Energy introduced Bill 35, the Energy Competition Act, he indicated there would be provision to ensure consumers had the option to choose green power suppliers. My constituents are asking me how they can help the environment by choosing cleaner forms of electricity. Can you please update me on what we can do to support cleaner air through our electricity suppliers?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I want to thank the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for the question. Indeed this government is supportive of alternative sources of energy that reduce overall emissions to the atmosphere. As you indicated in your question, Bill 35 facilitates the development of green power by requiring disclosure of generation sources to consumers. In addition, the Ministry of the Environment introduced a regulation that requires all electricity generators to monitor their emissions and report to the public on an ongoing basis on their environmental performance. This regulation has been in effect since May of this year.

We're already reaping the benefits of these policies. Just today this government approved a declaration order to allow the development of two wind-powered turbines. This project is a partnership between the Toronto Renewable Energy Co-operative and Toronto Hydro, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the proponents for offering the citizens of the city of Toronto a green power alternative.

Mr Gill: Minister, does that mean you will not be conducting an environmental assessment of these kinds of wind-turbine projects, should one be proposed in my riding?

Hon Mr Newman: The ministry is currently evaluating these kinds of alternative energy sources on a case-by-case basis. In the case of this project, we felt that since the federal environmental review process had already been completed, and because it would have addressed the same concerns we would have looked at, conducting another environmental assessment would have caused undue duplication without providing any added environmental value. Based on the merits of the proposed wind turbine, such as reducing emissions of climate-change-causing greenhouse gases and smog, we felt the project deserved a green light.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues across the floor—the member for Toronto-Danforth and the member for Beaches-East York—for their support of the declaration order that will allow this very worthwhile project to go ahead. I'm very pleased, as this demonstrates once and for all that when partisan differences are set aside, the environment benefits.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier. It has to do with the shooting death of Dudley George at Ipperwash Provincial Park. We believe there is a need for a full public inquiry.

We're concerned that with the passing of time, key files will go missing. It has already happened in one case, as you probably are aware, and the Solicitor General, when asked about it, acknowledged that indeed a key file did go missing. He said at the time, "Indeed we are concerned about the loss of these files in terms of our ability to retain very important and critical files. I share your concern with respect to that. The current deputy has initiated a review of the retention policy."

We sent you a letter today, Premier, asking that you issue a directive to your cabinet and to the public service ordering a retention of all files related to Ipperwash, pending a public inquiry. My question to you is, will you do that today? Will you issue to the cabinet and to the public service a directive ensuring that all files are retained, pending a public inquiry?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Sure.

Mr Phillips: I appreciate that answer. Just a couple of details on that then. Because it is of significant importance—frankly, we haven't heard back on the investigation of the loss of those other files—will you give us a date when you will issue that, and will you assure us that that directive will be made public, Mr Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: I don't know anything more public than the Legislature right here in the province of Ontario. So let me say to all who are looking and let me say to you that absolutely no files or any memos or anything at any time ought to be destroyed that may pertain to this. If this has occurred and you have an example of that, show us who is responsible and who is involved and we'll take the appropriate action.

In the meantime, let me repeat that that has always been the direction of the government of Ontario and I'm happy to repeat that for you right here in the Legislature.

Mr Phillips: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I'm happy to table the evidence and to say that it was the Solicitor General who—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): You can send it across. It is not a point of privilege, but you can send it across.

TIME LIMITS IN CIVIL DISPUTES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Attorney General. Minister, I've dealt with numerous calls from my constituents in the riding of Durham, both plaintiffs and defendants, who have raised questions about unclear and unfair time limits to law, specifically civil lawsuits.

I would like to ask the Attorney General what the new legislation, the Limitations Act, will mean for Durham constituents, as well as all constituents of the province of Ontario, to settle civil disputes. How will this legislation strike a balance between the rights of plaintiffs and respondents in civil court proceedings?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Durham for the question. The legislation, if it's passed, will consolidate dozens of outdated and non-cohesive

limitations legislation in Ontario into one clear, updated piece of legislation. It proposes two clear and fair time frames. In consulting widely with stakeholders, we have struck a balance, we believe, between reasonable discovery times, a reasonable time for a victim to launch a suit and the reasonable expectation of potential defendants to end uncertainties surrounding potential suits.

So, first of all, there's a two-year basic limitation period, subject to the discoverability rule, and then a 15-year ultimate limitation period, with some significant exceptions relating to children, sexual assaults, persons with a disability and environmental matters.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for that, Minister, because often my constituents, and I'm sure most Ontarians, find some of the legal procedures confusing and disconnected. I was pleased to hear there was a special emphasis on protecting minors, persons who may have difficulties bringing a claim, as well as victims of sexual assault.

I wonder if you could expand upon the specific special measures which have been launched to protect victims of sexual assault and specifically protecting children in the province of Ontario.

Hon Mr Flaherty: We are, of course, concerned with protecting the interests of vulnerable persons. As a general rule, the basic limitation period does not run while the person with the claim is unable to pursue it because he or she is a minor or incapable. The legislation does provide for the appointment of a litigation guardian to provide a mechanism for defendants to start the limitation period running, and there are certain safeguards regarding court process with respect to that issue.

There's another important exception, and that is with respect to sexual assault at the hands of people who are in a position of trust to the victims. No alternate limitation period is proposed in those circumstances. This makes the strongest possible statement against this kind of sexual assault.

1440

GIFTS FOR CHILDREN

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Premier. I want to ask you about your generous offer to personally make sure that every child in Ontario gets a Christmas gift. Your phones have been ringing off the hook as desperate parents take you up on your offer. But you know what they're discovering, Premier? You've built a Harris Claus into your Santa Claus offer.

Get this: parents who call for a gift are subjected to a screening interview to make sure their kids won't get one other gift from any other possible source. Your Harris Claus offer puts children through as rigorous a screening process as your welfare program.

Premier, I've heard of Santa Claus checking his list twice, but for you to be doing this is ridiculous. What's next, Premier? Are you going to start warning Ontario's

poor children that if they get two gifts this Christmas, they'll be cut off your Santa Claus list forever?"

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The whole area of kids, of any kid in Ontario not getting a toy at Christmastime bothered me. So I did offer to use my office, to use the Office of the Premier of Ontario, to use my name with whatever influence we could to ensure that did not happen.

I would encourage all members of the Legislature to join in that offer to the best of our ability. We have had a number of calls. We have been able to refer them to appropriate agencies.

I can tell you there have been a number of private sector companies, which is consistent with the philosophy of Ontario's Promise, Zellers, Wal-Mart, Canadian Tire, which already run successful toy drives, a number of media outlets, both newspapers and radio stations, television stations.

Ms Churley: More downloading, Premier. Premier, you should call the North Pole and get some advice from the real Santa Claus. You see, he can tell you what it's really like.

Get this, Premier: not only do parents face this screening interview under your offer, but they won't even really receive the gift from you. As you've just said, your office is simply referring parents to charitable and volunteer organizations that are already snowed under with so many gift requests this Christmas that they can't meet them all.

You're a fake Santa Claus, Premier. You're ripping the gift tags off gifts raised through the efforts of volunteer firefighters and charitable agencies that have been raising money for months to help out. You're falsely advertising that these gifts come from you.

It's a ho-ho-hoax, Premier. Many of those organizations are already suffering from the cutbacks your government has inflicted on them during your time in office. These groups have been left holding the bag while you're playing Scrooge. Now you want to take credit for their efforts.

I've got some advice for you, Premier. If you so badly want to play Santa Claus, why don't you raise the minimum wage and raise welfare rates so parents have the dignity of going out and buying gifts for their—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member's time is up. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: Certainly no government in recent history in Ontario has done more to give people the dignity of a job than has this government.

In fact, we heard yesterday where 250,000 children dependent upon welfare under your government are no longer dependent upon welfare in the province. This is a record of accomplishment unparalleled and, I might add, being pointed to across Canada, indeed in North America, the record of success of ending that dependency. Poverty, as you know, is down. The United Nations says that. Olivia Chow says that.

In spite of all that, I have to say to the member that there still exists, as shameful as it may seem in this

prosperous province, the possibility that there is a child who will wake up on Christmas morning without even a toy. I would like your assistance, and the assistance of all members of the Legislature, to respond, as many agencies and private sector companies have responded—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up. If we could stop the clock here for just a moment.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just in case he has to leave, in the members' gallery east we have the former member Mr Jack Carroll, from Chatham-Kent, a member of the 36th Parliament.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. I want to read to you clause 36(3)(h.1) from your privacy bill. It says, "A health information custodian may disclose personal health information ... to the Attorney General, if the custodian believes that the disclosure would assist in determining whether a proceeding should be commenced under the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act...."

Minister, you have said that you will take that clause out of your bill and you claimed it was a drafting error. It was not a drafting error. In my meeting with your legal advisers earlier this week it was made clear that this clause was in your bill because the Attorney General wanted it there.

Your office has now said that the clause isn't needed because it duplicates what is in the Attorney General's own bill. In other words, the Attorney General is giving himself the power to look at confidential health information and there is nothing in your bill to stop him. The Attorney General keeps referring to section 6 of your bill to try and create a smokescreen so that he can get exactly what he has wanted all along, which is access to the confidential health records that you're entrusted to hold.

Yesterday, Dalton McGuinty asked you what protections were in your bill that would prevent the Attorney General from getting confidential health records that are in your keeping. You sloughed off the question because you know there are no protections in your bill. So today I will ask you, what protections are you prepared to put into your bill to make sure that the Attorney General has no legal right to get private health records on suspicion alone?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): This is unbelievable, and I'm going to refer it to the Attorney General to answer.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I suppose what I should do, since this has been explained in the House I think three times now, is offer to the member, if you'd like to come and meet with counsel in the Ministry of the

Attorney General who will explain the bills to you, you're welcome to come over to the ministry at 720 Bay Street. I will arrange the appointment for you. They will explain it to you.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Health. I would be pleased to debate with the Attorney General on any occasion the fact that the issue he is raising is totally irrelevant because of the content of his own bill.

I say to the Minister of Health again, the fact is that your so-called health privacy bill, the one that you have tabled, is so wide open that it could be called the access to records bill. It doesn't matter what smokescreen the Attorney General puts up, because the protections that your bill is supposed to offer can be stripped away by any other act of this Legislature, including the bill that has been tabled by the Attorney General.

Minister, you know that in your bill the Ontario Disability Support Program Act takes precedence over health privacy provisions. The Ontario Works Act takes precedence over health privacy. Section 11 of your bill goes so far as to say, "In the event of a conflict ... in this act respecting confidentiality and one in any other act, this act ..." takes precedence "unless this act or the other act specifically provides otherwise"—some other act such as the Attorney General's bill.

Minister, there's no protection here at all. Your officials told me they basically put into this bill whatever people thought they needed, and we're supposed to decide what stays and what goes.

What I tell you today is that what we need is a new act that truly is a health privacy act. I ask: will you withdraw this bill and give us a new one that actually protects the privacy of confidential health records?

Hon Mr Flaherty: With the greatest respect to the member opposite, I rather doubt that any drafters of legislation would have said to you they would throw anything into a bill that they thought might be appropriate. I rather doubt that accurately reflects that discussion.

Having said that, it's quite clear from section 6 of Bill 159 what personal health information is protected. If the member doesn't understand that, is confused about it, or any other members of her caucus are confused about it, I welcome them to come and meet with the legislative drafters, with counsel informed on the issue, who will explain it to them.

1450

OVERTIME

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of Labour. First of all, I think all would agree that labour issues are fairly intense in my riding of Oshawa, as they are for a lot of other members. After seeing the amendments this morning and hearing the comments and concerns from the third party, I'd like the Minister of Labour to maybe bring some clarification to this question regarding the overtime averaging for the

two-year period. Minister, if you could answer that question for us?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): The allegations made across the floor are absurd. The absurdity is that you're suggesting that somehow an employee would have to agree to overtime averaging for two years and they'd have no way of getting out or agreeing to anything else but. That's absurd, absolutely absurd.

What the legislation says is that there needs to be a time limit on how long these agreements can run. What we said in the legislation is that they can run no longer than two years, but the employee can sign for any duration they like. If they want to sign for one month, they can sign for one month. If they want to sign for four months, they can sign for four months. It is completely up to the employee how long they determine they want to average their overtime.

Under the old system that the NDP ran, they would issue a permit and the permit would average overtime forever. You could never get it back. We are saying that's not a good system. They need controls and abilities to govern their workweek. What we are saying is that they are best to make that decision, not the NDP.

Mr Ouellette: Before I go any further, I'd like to thank the minister personally for coming to the riding of Oshawa and giving the opportunity to answer the direct concerns and questions of my constituents and all those people who work in the labour force out there.

As well, the members of the third party brought forward some questions regarding the amendments they had put forward. Having seen those amendments, I wonder if you might give us some clarification on what is right and what is wrong in regard to their amendments.

Hon Mr Stockwell: The problem with the NDP amendment is that it is so restrictive and penalizes the employees to such a high degree that we in this caucus said, "We can't do that to the workers of Ontario. We can't restrict them to simply three issues that they would have to get the signature on." This legislation allows employees a broad opportunity on everything in the Employment Standards Act. They get to make a decision on how their workweek works, and they get to make that decision on the context of the entire bill. My poor friend from Hamilton over there would rather see workers only be allowed to make decisions on three issues that affect their workplace. I think that is shocking and absurd and I would not stand for that.

SCHOOLTEACHERS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I want to ask today a question of the Minister of Education. The question is about the mess you've got in schools. You've got another lockout taking place in Sudbury. You've got a situation where parents send their kids to school and they don't know any longer whether or not there's a qualified teacher dealing with their kids. In fact, as memos from the Toronto District School Board show, parents are no longer even assured that the teacher to

whom they entrust their kids' education has had a criminal background check, has been qualified by anyone as being capable to stand at the front of the classroom.

On Thursday, Minister, I gave you a lot of notice to tell us how many unqualified teachers you are sending into the classroom. Your ministry has to approve them, and yet neither you nor your ministry will tell us how often you're doing it in this poisoned atmosphere, where you're scaring people out of the province who don't want to teach here any more, where new graduates are in record numbers not teaching in this province. Tell us, how many unqualified people are you foisting on young people in this province?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): If the honourable member has concerns about the hiring practices of any school board, he should take those up with the school board. As the newly elected chair of the Toronto District School Board said very recently, Ontario, as is the rest of Canada, is facing what is a worldwide problem in the teaching profession. Even the College of Teachers said recently that the near-retirement age group continues at historic high numbers. That is a challenge. We are working with the College of Teachers and the teachers' federation. It is a priority for them, as it is for this government. We've taken significant steps, and will continue to do that, to assist school boards in having teachers standing in front of our classrooms who can do the job that we all expect them to do.

I think the honourable member would want to help support school boards in doing this rather than standing up and scaring the heck out of parents that somehow or other there are people who are threatening their kids in classrooms. That is not true. The honourable member should know that.

Mr Kennedy: If you want to reassure people, then be the Minister of Education. Act under the Education Act and tell us how many people you, as the minister, and your ministry have put into the schools around this province with a letter of permission that acknowledges your failure as the minister to attract and keep qualified teachers in this province, your failure to make sure there's an environment where children can learn positively. Minister, this is your fourth opportunity in the last week of the Legislature to tell us very simply—you want to assure parents; you don't want to be scaremongering—how many letters of permission you have given out from your ministry, because otherwise you've simply got your head stuck in the sand and you're trying to ignore a problem for which you are responsible.

Hon Mrs Ecker: As the honourable member knows, of course the ministry has all kinds of data about what's happening in the school system. If he had only asked in a legitimate fashion, perhaps we could have provided a full briefing for him so he would have recognized that letters of permission are not an unusual process. It is a flexibility mechanism that was in place when his government was in power and when the NDP were in power. For example, last year we issued 801 letters of permission, but do you know what? When the NDP were in power,

they issued over 2,000; when the Liberals were in power, they issued over 1,400 letters of permission.

I think the honourable member might wish to check the research once in a while before he tries to tell parents that school boards are not exercising their responsibilities. They take them very seriously. I expect them to and parents expect them to. Even the chair of the Toronto school board, who certainly is not a fan of this government, acknowledged very clearly that the board is doing what it needs to do to make sure the classrooms are safe and that we all need to work together to solve what is a worldwide—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

SNOWMOBILE SAFETY

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. A lot of us here in Ontario are pretty excited to see all this great snow. Certainly in my riding of Guelph-Wellington, and particularly in Guelph-Eramosa, people are already out enjoying it. We've got about two feet and we can hear snowmobiles buzzing around at night. People are having fun and enjoying our winter.

Across Ontario, people use snowmobiles for hunting and they use them for travel, trapping and angling. They are exciting vehicles and lots of fun, but they are not toys. I think all of us can think of some terrible accidents that have occurred in our ridings while people were out on their snowmobiles, and it is a serious problem that requires our attention. Would you outline for members of the House and for my own riding constituents in Guelph-Wellington what our government is doing to promote and ensure snowmobile safety?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): I thank my colleague the member for Guelph-Wellington for this important question at this time of the year. Of course any fatality on snowmobiles is a tragedy. MTO is continuing to do a great deal about snowmobile safety. This year we're flowing \$60,000 to the Ontario Snowmobile Safety Committee. As well as that, we are working with them and the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs to promote safe and responsible snowmobile activities.

The Ontario Snowmobile Safety Committee's public education activities this year include television and radio public service announcements, awareness activities, and distribution of educational material, with particular reference to ice thickness cards and brochures on the important issues of safety. The Ontario Snowmobile Safety Committee is also providing night riding and riding on ice information.

Mrs Elliott: I'm glad to see we're taking this seriously, but there is always room to do more. We have a bill before the House, Bill 101, the Motorized Snow Vehicles Amendment Act, and I understand this will be going before the committee on general government shortly.

What in this bill specifically will improve snowmobile safety?

Hon Mr Turnbull: MTO is certainly committed to implementing safety enforcement and enhancement through Bill 101. The changes include helmets that must be worn both on and off the trails and that meet motorcycle standards; lights must be used both on and off trails; reflective material for trailers towing snowmobiles; driving while the licence is suspended will now create a special offence and a penalty for driving the snowmobile without a driver's licence; and we are giving new provisions to help the police enforce safety.

1500

BERNARDO FILM

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Your government claims to care about victims of violent crime. You will know that an American film company proposes to come to Toronto to make a movie about Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka and the young women who were raped and murdered by Bernardo and Homolka. I've asked your Attorney General and your Minister of Culture to guarantee that no Ontario government building, no courthouse, no Ontario government facility will be made available for the making of this movie and to ensure that no taxpayers' money from the government of Ontario will go toward the financing of this movie.

Your Minister of Culture and your Attorney General say that there is nothing they can do. Premier, I've watched your government close hospitals, I've watched your government threaten school boards, all in furtherance of your agenda. How is it then, when it comes to protecting the victims who are still hurting from these horrendous crimes, that your government now, suddenly, can't do anything?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The Attorney General did not say we can't do anything. In fact, the Chair of Management Board has issued a directive to the ORC that no government buildings will be used for any film that has anything to do with Paul Bernardo. That has already been done. So I can assure you that there will certainly not be any co-operation from this government, because I think all members of the Legislature have indicated our abhorrence with this crime and any profiting from this crime by way of a movie, particularly at this time.

I think the Attorney General expressed from a legal point of view what legally we can do and cannot do to prevent such a film from taking place, either in the province of Ontario or anywhere else around the world for that matter. But there are things that we can do, and we are doing everything we can to express our concern, including not making any government facilities available.

Mr Hampton: Premier, I'm glad you clarified some of the remarks made by your Minister of Culture, but I want you to address one further issue. The other issue I raised is that no Ontario film and television tax credits be

made available to this company, that no one should be profiting in this province or in this city as a result of those horrendous crimes and no one should get taxpayers' money to make this kind of film.

I'm asking you—and we know that the budget bill is still before the House—to put a simple amendment into the budget bill before it is next dealt with by this Legislature that will ensure that this movie company will not receive any Ontario tax credits, any Ontario taxpayer money, to finance the making of this film. We can, by unanimous consent, deal with that amendment here now, today or before the House rises for Christmas. That will ensure that no taxpayers' money is used. That will ensure that your government does show some respect for those victims. I'm asking that commitment from you, Premier. Will you agree to that amendment to the budget bill which is still before the House, which already contains clauses dealing with the film and television tax credit? We can amend it before the House rises to ensure that no taxpayers' money is used. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: I'm prepared to look at anything that makes sense and is constitutional. I have received preliminary indication that we cannot and that bill is not amendable in that way. You say "this company"—we don't know which company; we don't know who. There have been rumours that everybody is responding to, and I think it's maybe appropriate that we send a signal out for anybody, anywhere, at any time in the future who may be considering this movie and how they may or may not proceed, particularly in the province of Ontario.

Ultimately, all films that are considered for a credit first of all must be completed before they are considered for the tax credit, so it is difficult sometimes to prejudge. On the other hand, the guidelines say that to be considered they must not violate public policy. Such violations include inciting hatred against—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order, I'm afraid the Premier's time is up.

MANDATORY DRUG TESTING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. As you may know, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the leading addiction counselling agency in this country, recently came out very strongly opposed to your mandatory drug testing and treatment for people on social assistance. They made it very clear that such an approach would perpetrate a stigma associated with poverty and addiction and may lead to detrimental individual and social consequences. They want to get your ear on this, Minister.

They also have some suggestions for how you may approach this. Some of their recommendations are that you should be looking at having existing caseworkers in the welfare system trained to appropriately screen and identify people with addictions and mental health problems. They have asked you to provide adequate housing, child care and vocational supports. They also say you

should direct the resources designated for this mandatory testing to expanding the capacity of the current treatment system.

Minister, this is an agency you should be listening to. I trust that you will. I'd like to ask you today whether you will withdraw your plans to go forward with mandatory drug testing, listen to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, and take another approach that would be far more sensitive to the needs of people.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): The answer is no. We are always prepared to listen to groups who provide support to vulnerable people in our community. I have, over the last week, had the opportunity to meet with more than four or five drug addiction treatment professionals. I had the opportunity last evening to visit one clinic here in the city of Toronto and talk to people who had in the past been drug addicts.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Baird: I answered the question very clearly at the outset: no.

The question the member opposite asked was, will we listen? You bet we'll listen. We'll listen on how we can provide supports, on how we can provide training to our caseworkers, on how we can provide supports to people to allow them to obtain addiction treatment. The one thing we will not do is give up. The one thing we will not do is turn our backs on people who obviously need our help. We're committed to providing people with the tools to get their lives back on track.

One thing that is clear is that the Liberal Party opposes all of our welfare reforms. They oppose work for welfare; they oppose our efforts to combat welfare fraud; they oppose our efforts to provide a hand up through mandatory drug treatment, through mandatory literacy programs. They oppose all of our welfare programs, but we will continue to work hard to try to provide people the dignity that comes with a job.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Ontario Legislature and it concerns northerners demanding that the Harris government eliminate health care apartheid.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;

"Whereas a recently released Oracle research poll confirms that 92% of Ontarians support equal health travel funding;

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province; and

"Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Loughheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

This is another 1,000 of the 60,000 we will be presenting to the Legislature; 30,000 more will be presented next week. I sign this and give it to Andrew to bring to the table because I am in complete agreement with it.

GREEN ENERGY

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario needs a green energy policy to protect the environment, improve health and strengthen the economy;

"Whereas the introduction of electricity sector competition in 2000 provides an excellent opportunity to implement a green energy policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Premier and the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology implement renewable energy quotas for all electricity suppliers; labelling of key fossil and nuclear station pollutants on electricity bills; a fee on electricity sales toward energy conservation and efficiency programs; strict mandatory caps on all fossil-generating stations and all electricity imports; permanent shutdown of the Pickering A and Bruce A nuclear plants; and no stranded nuclear debt bailout for Ontario Power Generation, formerly Ontario Hydro."

This has been sent to me by Irene Kock of the Nuclear Awareness Project and it's signed by hundreds of individuals in the GTA.

1510

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Speaker, a small preamble, with your indulgence. This may be the last time I have to read this petition on Bill 99, because it will be debated tomorrow and hopefully it will be passed.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using the year of manufacturing plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99, amending the Highway Traffic Act to allow vintage auto enthusiasts to register their vehicles using year of manufacturing plates."

I am pleased to give this to my page, Jared, who is from the riding of Durham, who will bring those to the table. Thank you for your service to the Legislature, Jared.

INTENSIVE LIVESTOCK OPERATIONS

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of the county of Prince Edward, petition the government of Ontario expressing our concerns relating to the uncontrolled spread of intensive livestock operations and the field application of liquid manure which poses a profound threat to our water, both ground and surface, to our air and to our quality of life; and

"Whereas under the existing laws of the province of Ontario there are no adequate controls directing the operation of such industrial farming operations; and

"Whereas municipal bylaws are inadequate or non-existent and therefore controls should be exercised at the provincial level; and

"Whereas the Ontario Environmental Commissioner recognizes in his recent report the potential for serious pollution of both our air and water from these operations;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislative Assembly to expedite the passing of legislation to meaningfully regulate the operation of intensive livestock operations and the spreading of manure therefrom, and to distinguish such industrial operations from traditional farming practices and to recognize that the adverse effects of industrial livestock operations are widespread and have a deleterious effect on our environment."

I am pleased to add my signature to this petition.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to be used on vintage automobiles."

I support this petition wholeheartedly.

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I have a petition about a very good bill that will be debated tomorrow.

"Whereas charities such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraisers on streets, sidewalks and parking lots;

"Whereas the Safe Streets Act, 1999, effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities; and

"Whereas charitable organizations are dependent on these fundraisers to raise much-needed money and awareness;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the government of Ontario amend provincial legislation by passing Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act, 2000, to allow charitable organizations to conduct fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots."

I am in total support of this petition and sign it, and I give it to Heather to deliver to the table.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition regarding this government's ongoing discrimination against northern cancer patients. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the northern Ontario health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province; and

"Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Loughheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

This has been signed by hundreds of residents of North Bay, the Premier's own riding. I would like to thank Gerry Loughheed Jr for all his work on this. I affix my signature to it.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I have petitions here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole"—known by other names—"and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to be used on vintage automobiles."

I'm pleased to submit this to the Legislature on behalf of the constituents of Mr O'Toole in Durham county.

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition here as well on a matter that will be debated in this House tomorrow, when we'll be debating Bill 64 put forward by the member from Essex. It deals with the Safe Streets Amendment Act. I'll read it to you because it has been signed by a number of people both in my riding and in the riding of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. It states as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas charities such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraisers on streets, sidewalks and parking lots;

"Whereas the Safe Streets Act, 1999, effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities; and

"Whereas charitable organizations are dependent on these fundraisers to raise much-needed money and awareness;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the government of Ontario amend provincial legislation by passing Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act, 2000, to allow charitable organizations to conduct fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots."

It's signed by about 20 individuals, and I agree with it so I've signed it as well. I'm handing it to Tim here, our page.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have petitions forwarded to me by UAW local 251 in Wallaceburg, and the petitions read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the proposed changes to the Employment Standards Act would take us back to the standards of the late 1800s; and

"Whereas most jurisdictions in the world are reducing the level of overtime required; and

"Whereas these changes would allow companies to force overtime up to 60 hours per week; and

"Whereas the proposed changes will allow companies the right to average overtime over three weeks to escape paying the appropriate level of overtime pay;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, demand that the Ontario government implement the following improvements to the Employment Standards Act:

"Tough, proactive policing of standards.

"A living wage to ensure no one lives in poverty.

"Overtime pay after an eight-hour day, 40-hour week.

"Three weeks' vacation after five years of service.

"More paid holidays.

"Paid breaks. We need a guarantee of rest breaks in each half-shift;

"Above all, we're calling for the right of all non-union workers to vote to join a union."

I'm proud to add my name to those of these petitioners.

1520

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, with your permission I'd like to take a moment to introduce Mr

Peter Minnis, who is a teacher at Clarke High School in my riding, and his OAC students who are attending in the visitors' gallery.

I will also read a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Hopefully, this will be the last time, as this will be part of the business tomorrow.

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act" to allow vintage auto enthusiasts to use year of manufacturing plates to register their vintage vehicles.

I'm pleased to present this to Geoff, one of my favourite pages here at the Legislature at this Christmas time of year, and it's my bill as well.

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have petitions signed by constituents from Timmins-James Bay, Prescott-Russell, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Huron-Bruce, Leeds-Grenville and Thunder Bay-Atikokan. It reads:

"Whereas charities such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraisers on streets, sidewalks and parking lots; and

"Whereas the Safe Streets Act, 1999, effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities; and

"Whereas charitable organizations are dependent on these fundraisers to raise much-needed money and awareness;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the government of Ontario amend provincial legislation by passing Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act, 2000"—standing in the name of Mr Crozier—"to allow charitable organizations to conduct fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots."

In support of this petition, I add my signature and give it to Rose to take to the Clerk's desk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): That completes the time allocated for petitions. I would just

like to remind members that we're taking a little bit of liberty with the standing orders, editorializing a little bit too much on petitions. In the future, we may want not to do that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to call orders 11 to 23, inclusive, so that they may be moved and debated simultaneously.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Klees has requested unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Klees: I move concurrence in supply for the following ministries and offices:

Ministry of the Environment

Ministry of Education and Training

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and its supplementaries

Ministry of Community and Social Services

Ministry of Tourism

Ministry of Labour

Management Board Secretariat

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Ministry of the Attorney General

Ministry of Northern Development and Mines

Ministry of the Solicitor General

Ministry of Correctional Services

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care—

Interjections: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker: Dispense. Debate?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a real pleasure to be asked to debate at this particular time of year. I hope all party members are able to express thanks to their constituents and to make positive comments about what is actually happening at this time of year. For all people, I want to put on the record that I extend season's greetings and best wishes for a safe, happy and family-oriented, prosperous Christmas and/or Hanukkah and other times being celebrated by all different faiths that make up this wonderful province of Ontario.

In concurrences and in debates with respect to that, I will not be specifically commenting on the minister's budget allocations, which basically permit ministries to pay sums of money that have been allocated within their budgets. That in itself is somewhat dry. I think there will be liberty by members on all sides of the House this afternoon to bring to the attention of this House, as well as to the people of Ontario, initiatives in their ridings that in some respects are relevant to the debate.

The very first thing I did today was to comment to the press about an event happening in my riding under the

auspices of the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. There was a debate in the riding. In fact, the ministries were there meeting with the people and dealing with the very important issues. The citizens' group was known as the Protect the Ridges group. That group was getting explained to them the details of the spreading of paper sludge from Atlantic Packaging on farmland. This is an ongoing study before my constituents and it affects a great part of the riding of Durham. This study is to report to them where the findings are at this point, midway in that study. You might say the Ministry of the Environment is working—and I could mention Debbie Vice, who has been the leader of Protect the Ridges, and I noticed other members there such as Tony Pratt, another very well informed citizen. I know that there were other members of the riding of Durham there listening. Representing the Ministry of the Environment was David Beach, the York district office person who was on the scene.

Thinking through things that have happened recently in my riding, I don't want to go on too much here, but in the limited time I have I will mention a couple of important highlights. Last night on the way home from the Legislature, I had been invited to attend the annual recognition dinner for the local sea cadet corps. Mr Ray Abernathy, who, by the way, has served 20 years voluntarily for that organization, was being recognized as part of that community event. So I publicly say that I was late getting there, but I did get to the event and said thank you to Ray Abernathy and to others who are a great inspiration and leadership for the youth in the riding of Durham. Again, I thank them for that. It was a very optimistic event made up of families: Mr and Mrs Harold St Croix; I met them. They are constituents of mine who have been involved in a number of things. I think of my riding and it's a real privilege to be here speaking and, in some respects, representing my constituents. That's a very important part of this job that I take very seriously.

If I move back to earlier in the week, I was very fortunate to be invited, almost a week ago now, on behalf of the Honourable Cam Jackson, whose tourism ministry is in concurrence here, to present a cheque to the Bowmanville Zoo. That cheque was being presented—I think the amount was \$7,500—as part of the tourism partnership program. The Bowmanville Zoo is one of the oldest privately operated zoos in Ontario, if not Canada. It also puts out an important kind of recognition of Christmas: the animals of Christmas and what they bring to the season. I think it's important to recognize that.

1530

I also think of the other things going on within the riding. I want to thank people like Garth Gilpin, who put on the tree-lighting ceremony in downtown Bowmanville a couple of weeks ago. I want to thank the members of the BIAA, not just in Bowmanville, but all of the merchants in Bowmanville, Newcastle, Port Perry and Orono. I think of many of those volunteers that make the downtown so at festive this time of year. Those are just some of the glancing highlights I can recall that have

happened in the last several days that are worth mentioning, not just respectfully about my riding, but I'm certain are happening throughout the communities that make up this great province.

I think back in government terms of what's actually happening. I think that even today and yesterday in the House there were questions, and one of the ministries on concurrence here is the Ministry of Health, which brought in the initiative on health privacy. That is the whole issue of the ability to collect, use and disclose personal health information. People would know that for perhaps the last 10 years or so, there have been discussions on that, everything from mental health to other areas.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: I was just wondering if perhaps the members next to me could move somewhere else so I don't have to hear them talking while I'm trying to speak. I think that—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: No, no, it does interfere, it does interrupt. I hope I'm not being rude, but it was interrupting.

On that health privacy information issue that I was just speaking of, Elizabeth Witmer, as you know, has had three different consultations since, I believe, 1995 on that issue and it is controversial, there's no question about it. Mr Phillips is certainly here listening and he would say that people in Scarborough-Agincourt take the protection of their personal health information very seriously. I know our minister recognizes that. Yet, if you look at the reality today, there is exchange going on between doctors and long-term care facilities, between labs and pharmacies etc, and it would be wrong to assume that this information is totally secure today.

All we're doing is moving toward more demands in the health care system and the need to transfer information reliably and securely. These are the very fundamental issues that we're dealing with. I think that often the questions in question period don't help the people of Ontario realize that it's incumbent on the government, whichever government, of every stripe, to take steps to ensure that privacy, above all, is respected with regard to health care—and for that matter, all information.

If you want, you can expand that just one step to the whole issue of privacy in the electronic environment, in commercial transactions. During this time of year we pass our credit cards out rather liberally in some cases, and we all know that today there is a certain amount of fraud in that whole area. It's incumbent on the government to protect consumers, whether that's a health consumer or just a consumer in the commercial marketplace.

So that's something that's going on and is extremely important. We have heard questions recently about another ministry here that's under these concurrence discussion, and that is education. I believe the Ministry of Education has had a very difficult time to ensure that we focus on the students in the classroom. All of the other things we could talk about have arguably been talked about since I was a trustee in the early 1980s. I think we

can focus on the students and quality in the classroom, and I guess I publicly realize that teachers—as I say, my wife, and my middle daughter is a new high school teacher. I know it's difficult.

We, as taxpayers and as legislators, must make sure we put the resources in the classroom. I want to be on the record as saying that anything I can personally do to be positive and supportive of front-line teachers—as the EIC report that was issued just a couple of weeks ago said, we've got to sort out this difference of view and difference of ideology, if you will, between the teachers' unions on the one side and the government on the other side. I, as a member of this government, would like to be on the record as saying that if there's anything I can do to improve the respect and respectful relationships—I didn't say we'd always disagree, but we should show respect and appreciation for one another. That would be another statement I would like to have on the record this afternoon.

I really think Minister Eves in his economic outlook, his balanced-budget kind of comment here—I believe it was last week—stressed how important the fundamentals are, the importance for all members of the House to recognize that without a strong economy, many of the things we're doing, the additional money, some \$23 billion in health care—I may speak at some length about what that's doing in our riding—are all about having the economic fundamentals.

The member for Scarborough-Agincourt may want to mention this, as he's a critic for the opposition in that area, and I have a lot of respect for that. The most important thing is to look at the over 800,000 net new jobs that have been created, not by the government but by creating the right environment. There'll be those who argue it's an export-based drive and recovery, but that to me is not the most important issue. Being competitive in the global economy is absolutely fundamental.

That competitiveness starts, as Jean Chrétien said at Duke University just last week, and Ontario is an example, with federal and provincial tax rates that put us at a very definite competitive advantage. It was the Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chrétien, who said that at Duke University. So he's beginning to recognize—while at the same time there would be those who argue against tax cuts—that our basic mantra for some time was, "Tax cuts create jobs." I think there is a relationship between cutting taxes and creating jobs.

It's economic investment that we should be measuring and holding the private sector accountable for. There's no free ride for anyone, including them. I suspect, just dwelling on this for a moment, that the whole argument about whether tax cuts are appropriate is really a very serious question. I think that making the proper investments and having mechanisms for accountability are fundamentally more important than the semantics of the original question of whether we should cut taxes. Cutting taxes and making the proper investments, as we have—we've committed record numbers of dollars, the most dollars per capita, capital and operating, to the people of

Ontario for our health care system. I could expect just as much from the federal government.

Allan Rock, or whoever the new health minister is, needs to listen not just to Mike Harris but to all the Premiers. They made it very clear that they've got to start to put back more than 14 cents on the dollar in health care to have the finest, most successful health care system in the world, with an aging population and new technology and all the other motives at risk there, and at the same time have an education system that invests money in students and front-line teaching and some of the other things. They should be questioned. We need high standards and we need to make sure our children's future is being assured. That struggle goes on. I hope it ends as soon as possible.

Minister Eves was talking in his statement of having the fundamentals that provide a healthy economy, that provide opportunities for everyone to share in a much more prosperous economy, a much more prosperous society with fewer people, as the Premier said today—especially children and the most vulnerable in our society. The wealthier the province is, the more prosperous it is, the more it can support those who are most vulnerable. That's, I think, a difference of opinion here.

With the previous governments—we often refer to the 10 years as the lost decade—the problem was that they felt tax policies were the old thing, that governments can fix things by taking more money or resources out of the bucket. They thought they could tax and spend their way out of this economic spiral they were in. It started in 1989-90 when they had record employment, record revenue, and yet had the most number of people on welfare because they made it almost an advantage to be on welfare as opposed to getting a job.

These differences of views probably will continue to exist, because in many ways the opposition mostly has opposed all the reforms to welfare. What we said with our welfare reforms was that people deserve an opportunity for a job as opposed to a cheque. We called it a hand up instead of a handout. Let's get down to it. The most important, the most empowering thing you can do for an individual is to give them an opportunity to earn their own dignity and their own daily bread.

I think that goes beyond ideology. It's a complete difference of view, that government can do it better than the individual. I don't support that and I don't think members of this caucus do, but I think that when all is said and done, many strategic investments were made as part of Mr Eves's and Premier Harris's remarks. I'm going to mention a few of them.

1540

We would be wrong not to recognize the importance of agriculture. The diversity of agriculture is one of the fundamental strengths of this province, not just in the wines and tender fruits but in the field crops and the livestock area. Agriculture is the second-largest industry in Ontario and it is in some peril. Many of the programs, whether it is MISA or GRIP or market revenue or whole farm relief, in many cases are very complex financial

support programs. Many of them are shared by the farmer, the federal government and the provincial government. Many have insurance-based principles within them.

Minister Hardeman has met with constituents in my riding. Dr Doug Galt has been instrumental in leading consultations on rural economic development. With his background, his experience and his riding next to mine—hopefully he'll be speaking this afternoon and will fill that out a bit more—he is a person who takes it beyond just a job as an MPP. He has worked as a veterinarian all his adult life, and in a public sense as well he has a lot to offer. He will offer an awful lot. I believe in the future we will hear more from Dr Galt with respect to prioritizing this government's agenda on agriculture.

Clearly we need the federal government to get on board as well and make sure that the supports, when we are dealing with market prices that are set in Chicago, in the United States, where the subsidies under the—I call it a liberal government, soon to be changed. That may help things a bit. I think the government in the United States has been unfairly subsidizing market products to our disadvantage. We all know that trade issues, trade subsidies, trade wars, and where there's GATT agreements or whatever kinds of trade agreements, free trade and otherwise, are a federal responsibility. Mr Bradley often holds up these humorous little cards that have "(1) Blame the feds." It is an absolute failure of leadership at the national level.

We've just been through a federal election. What I saw was disdainful in terms of indifference to or ignoring the agricultural plight. There are fewer and fewer farmers. To them, that means fewer votes that really matter. They do matter, not just in my riding of Durham but they matter to this province, to Dr Galt and to Minister Ernie Hardeman.

With this Christmas message on concurrence, agriculture ranks right up there in protecting the land, the soil and the water, part of the Ministry of the Environment's responsibility, working hand in hand—I would like to hope that in the next few days they will introduce legislation that may be debated over the break after Christmas: the nutrients management plan that municipalities are looking for, not just in Durham but across the province, for guidance on standards for animal units and how much effluent and how to manage it, and have accountability in that. It is very difficult. This government has never shied away from difficult decisions.

There are some issues I've mentioned, without trying to become too heavy, in the agricultural sector. Most important is to state that the agricultural sector is the backbone of this economy. Our freedom as a province and as a country is to have our own food supply not at risk. Farmers who have bad years need to be supported. We have to look at the averaging of those income supports. That is the issue that at the current time I believe lacks some clear federal leadership.

The provincial leadership is clearly in place. I think this government has held Mr Lyle Vanclicf to task, as we have Allan Rock, when he was the health minister.

As everyone knows, Ontario is about 30% of the country's population. I think it's about 50% of the country's economic plan. All we would ask for from the federal government is to keep Ontario healthy—a fair share, not one cent more than our fair share based on some per capita formula, but they always discount. Ontario is the industrial heartland of this country. It has a responsibility to our national redistribution of wealth, and that's understandable. In Ontario, if we see the economic cycle repeat, and it will, in times when our agricultural community, which has a larger gross than the rest of Canada's provinces, needs to be supported, we need to have our fair share. It was Minister Hardeman who held the federal government to the table and their feet to the fire to make sure that Ontario farmers, for the first time in years, got their fair share of that whole thing.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: I hear the member from the other side, from Elgin-Middlesex-London, disagreeing with me. I'm not sure what his position on this is, because yesterday he was asking a question to the Minister of Health and in fact it was an agricultural issue.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It was a health issue, a public health issue.

Mr O'Toole: It is clearly a matter of misunderstanding and not directing his interest and concerns in the right area.

Another part that was mentioned clearly is tax strategy, and the advantages in tax strategy are such that I think the government has made some provisions, in its budgetary wisdom, to provide new educational technology tax incentives. Let me expand on that for a moment. It encourages businesses to support Ontario's universities and community colleges in acquiring new equipment and technology through a tax credit system. I think this is absolutely fundamental, to have the right tools in the right place at the right time without it just being another government handout.

It's forming partnerships with our colleges and universities that allows them to have the right kinds of support and the right kinds of investments so that you've got some relationship between putting the money in and getting the outputs out. I think of Gary Polonsky, and Terry Hing, the chairman of the board of directors for Durham College and University Centre, and their enormous effort in trying to become a manufacturing centre, a technology centre, a computer and robotics centre, and training our young people for what I'd call the technology economy we're in.

Also, I believe having university access in Durham will help me and the member from Oshawa and Janet Ecker and Jim Flaherty, the other members representing Durham, so that children can go to post-secondary more affordably than having to go to McMaster or Guelph or some other university or college out of where they live.

Bringing services closer to people, fundamentally, is critical to this government.

Just a couple of weeks ago, Mr Ouellette and I were at an important investment in health care, \$17.4 million for operational—these weren't capital dollars. We made a tremendous amount of capital investment in Lakeridge Health for a new cancer treatment centre, expanded out-patient services, acute care services and dialysis just the week before. There was I think \$3 million for hip and knee replacement orthopaedics as well as the new babies, the neo-natal program. I was so impressed that the Lakeridge board—and not just Brian Lemon, but the board itself—really wants to work with the government co-operatively. That doesn't mean they're not going to be critical sometimes, but I see those volunteer board members as being committed to working with Durham region to sort out this dilemma of how to build the very latest technology and provide patient services closer to home.

There's a case where this government has provided start-up capital, and the municipality, the local government, the taxpayers have to find ways of raising some additional matching funds to make those things a reality, because we do want patient services closer to where the people live, and certainly not just in Durham, but this is happening across the province of Ontario.

I believe the time is to be shared and other members are preparing to stand in my place. With that I just wish everyone the best of the season and thank you for the privilege of addressing you this afternoon and allowing you to understand what's on my mind as we go into a new year, a new century, with optimism in this economy in Ontario.

1550

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to continue the debate on concurrence, which essentially, for the public's information, is the Legislature providing the government with the authority to spend the necessary funds to fund the government. I want to start by commenting on the way the Harris government spends our money. The public are probably used to the opposition and the government being in a dispute about this, so I'll use the Provincial Auditor's report.

As you know, the people of Ontario engage an independent auditor, the Provincial Auditor, to look at both the way we keep our books—the finances—and the way we spend our money. The auditor, among other things, produces an accountability and value-for-money report. This year's report was very damaging to the government. In fact, when the Provincial Auditor held a media availability after presenting his report, the reporters from the media said, "It looks like things are getting worse in terms of managing the finances of the province."

The auditor said he had been the Provincial Auditor for eight years now and this year's report and last year's report were the most damning reports on the government's expenditure of money since he's been the auditor. In other words, the Harris government is worse at spending the taxpayers' money than, dare I say, the NDP.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I thought we were cutters.

Mr Phillips: Mr Beaubien is choosing to yell, but I say to the public, remember what the auditor said: the worst two reports were this year and last year.

The previous member was just talking about the Minister of Agriculture. The auditor said this and the auditor took an extraordinary step. He actually went around the minister. He was forced—because the minister wouldn't do it, the minister wasn't acting—to step in and, on behalf of the taxpayers, make sure that a government agency appointed by this government, all the board appointed by it, didn't do things that were, frankly, illegal. He said among his findings were that Agricorn lost \$325,000 in a speculative investment to buy and sell bonds on a daily basis, and—this is important—this agency, Agricorn, also violated its fiduciary responsibility by attempting to transfer the loss to the Ontario Insurance Corp. The auditor had to intervene to reverse that transfer. Then it goes on to say:

"Contrary to legislation"—in other words, acting illegally—"on several occasions, Agricorn sought to remove money from the Ontario Crop Insurance Fund to pay for its administrative expenses. My office had to intervene to ensure the fund remained intact. Without a proper business case and without tender, they engaged an intermediary to place a \$14.5-million insurance coverage with a private insurance company."

That's one example where the minister was derelict in his duties and the auditor—I've never seen it here before actually—actually had to intervene around the minister to protect the taxpayers. That's not the only place. I say to the public, get a copy of this report and read it.

The auditor went on to say—and this is a total condemnation of Premier Harris's actions on the environment; this is the staff at the Ministry of the Environment that has the responsibility for monitoring and inspecting our water and our air—that since 1994, and the Premier took over in 1995, they've reduced their staff level by over 25%. "A reduction in staff of 25% over the last four years had contributed to a 34% decrease in the number of ministry-initiated inspections conducted per year." He goes on to point out that we are putting at risk the health and safety of the people of Ontario. This is the auditor.

He went on, in the health area, to point out that the government has decided to put ambulance service on to the property taxpayers. This is a move that no one except Premier Harris thinks is a good idea. As a matter of fact, the government appointed the Who Does What committee, headed up by David Crombie, to look at whether this service should be put on to property tax. This group said, "The panel"—14 hand-picked people—"strongly opposes such a move. We are unanimous in the view that it shouldn't happen." But Premier Harris, for whatever reason, has decided that ambulance services should be on property tax and should be run by municipalities.

The auditor points out and warns us—by the way, the auditor warned the government in 1996 and in 1998, and is warning the government again on the environment. On

the ambulance service, the auditor is warning us, he's saying this is a problem. He points out that the ministry estimates an additional \$40 million annually is needed just to meet the response times. He points out that the ministry estimated in the year 2000 an additional \$53 million would be needed to maintain the existing levels of service. He says that we put at risk the seamless health system that all of us believe we should have. We don't think that an ambulance should stop at a border, we don't think that a municipal border is a sensible boundary for health needs, but that's what the government has decided to do. The auditor, quite rightly, points out the problems with it.

The auditor went on to say that he's not going to sign the books of the province any more unless the government changes its ways and stops—these are my words, not his words—cooking the books, stops writing off against one year an expense that never occurred in that year. He's said, for the final time, "This is it. I am not going to sign your books any more." This year he forced the government to put on our financial statements an almost \$20-billion debt that the Premier tried to keep off the books. The auditor would not sign the books until that almost \$20 billion of stranded debt from electrical restructuring was put on the books.

The reason I go through all of this is that many of my business friends say, "Well, they're called Conservatives. They purport to be the friend of business. They must know how to manage the finances." I say, "Don't take my word for it. Look at the Provincial Auditor's report and listen to what he says. He now says these are the two most damaging, damning reports he's produced." I would also add that the credit rating agencies, whose business it is to rate the creditworthiness of companies and governments—after almost six years of Mike Harris, Ontario still has exactly the same credit rating that it had under Bob Rae. Nothing has changed. With a booming North American economy—by the way, on why Ontario's economy is doing so well, if you talked to any economist, I don't think you can find any economist who would not say the most important reason for Ontario's growth is because of our exports to the United States, driven heavily by auto and high-tech. I don't think you can find any economist who would not say that is the major reason, the number one reason. In that booming economy, we still have the same credit rating we had under Bob Rae. Nothing's changed.

Interjection.

1600

Mr Phillips: My colleague says that's terrible, and I agree.

In my last few minutes, I also say to the people of Ontario that to me the essential elements of our society in Ontario, among the most important fabrics that hold us together, are our health care system, our education system, the way we manage the environment, our social housing and our labour relations. I would just say to all of us, does anybody believe the health care system is in better shape today than when Mike Harris became

Premier? I don't. Any objective look at it by people who are on the front lines will tell you it's gotten worse. Does anybody believe that our education system is functioning better now than it did five years ago? Does anybody believe our environment's better? The auditor points out that in his opinion, and my opinion, we have made a huge mistake. We have ignored the environment for five years, cut 25% of the staff and are paying the price.

In the last few hours we passed a bill that downloads housing on to municipalities. We know that in Ontario there should be at least 15,000 rental units built each year. In the last three years there have not been 1,000 built each year. We are building up an enormous backlog of problems, and what have we done? We've downloaded it on to the municipalities, again against the advice of the very people who were appointed to look at this. So that's on housing.

On the issue of labour relations, this is a book called *Doing Business in Ontario*. It talks about why companies should invest in Ontario. It points out that one of the reasons you should come to Ontario is, "The labour-management legal framework is streamlined and balanced. Labour-management relations are constructive and stable. Bargaining is rooted in realism and a clear understanding of the competitive nature of the global economy," and "Our workforce is forward-looking, sensible, self-relevant, level, loyal and committed." Yet what have we done? As we speak right now, in another part of this building there is a committee that is making fundamental changes to the relationships between employers and employees in this province. The government has just introduced a series of additional amendments that will fundamentally shift that balance, and they fundamentally shift it toward the employer and away from the employee.

On these key issues of the environment, health, education, housing and our labour relations, with all due respect to the Premier, he's making things worse rather than better.

I just wanted to say, then, to all of us who are now being asked to vote on this motion to give the government approval to spend money, first, look at the independent auditor, who has made this conclusion that the value for money is getting worse in the province of Ontario. Ask ourselves, each of us in Ontario, is our health care system better now than in 1995 when Premier Harris got elected? I say no. Is our education system better now? It's in turmoil. He has demoralized our teachers. The thing I know from my experience and that I believe strongly is that the key to successful education is quite simple: it is having motivated teachers, well-trained and talented, as we've got, in front of classrooms. It's that simple. We now have a demoralized teaching staff.

I recently went back to my 40th reunion of my football team in high school. It was a great reunion. All three of my coaches were there, after 40 years, all three of them—Glyn Lehson, Bill Traut and Will Rice—great guys. They remembered every one of us. They remembered every number. They remembered every play. They

were our friends. They, to this day, influenced our lives. They are models for us.

Education is not a mechanical exercise; it's not a factory. Secondary school is not a factory. It's not somewhere that you get a mechanical operation; it is relationships between teachers and the students, and we're undermining that.

I'll tell you another small part of it. A few months later in Scarborough we had the Ontario basketball championships in my old school. London Central showed up. They were in the Ontario championships. Guess who the two coaches were: sons of Glyn Lehson and Will Rice. It's not unusual.

My point is that we are making a fundamental mistake in education. I think Mike Harris thinks these are plants or factories, to be run like factories. Our schools are human, living organisms, and the most important key to success in them is to have teachers motivated. I benefited enormously—I suspect everyone in this room did—from good teachers with personal relationships. As I say, we are trying to turn our education system into a factory, and we're making a huge mistake.

Health, education, the environment, housing and labour relations, instead of getting better, as they should be in a growing economy, are getting worse. So I say to Ontario, I wish we could say we're heading down the right road. For some reason or other, Harris has decided to take us down a road that I think leads to continued frustration in Ontario.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to pick up where the member for Scarborough-Agincourt left off when he talks about the building up of frustration, anxiety and worry out there among the populace who call Ontario home.

I want to say I appreciate the opportunity to put some thoughts on the record here this afternoon, particularly where this government's record is concerned, where I think it has taken us and why I think it's a bad plan that will not serve the whole of Ontario in the way we have the potential to serve all of Ontario, particularly given the tremendous amount of wealth that has been created over the last 10 years or so and that continues to be created in this province due primarily to the tremendous effort of people of all ilk across Ontario who get up every day, go to work and contribute their resources, the talent they have, so that Ontario can continue to be a good place to live and to bring up children.

It seems to me that one of the more fundamental reasons that this government gets so many of their programs wrong is that they start from the wrong place. If we look at the initiatives they have brought forward since they became government in 1995, it was clear from the start which master they were trying to serve and what motivated everything they have done: all of the thinking, all of the initiatives, all of the programs they laid out for us in the Common Sense Revolution and then began to put in place not long after they got into power.

When looking for direction, when looking at whether a program they've come up with is good for all the

people of Ontario, this government asks the question first, "Will this please the corporate elite? Will this be approved by the multinational corporations and the big business interests in this province?"—the so-called golden goose that from time to time lays the golden egg. If it is approved by them, if it's something that will be pleasing to them, they assume it will be good for everybody, that the wealth and money that is generated by that particular initiative, whether it be a tax cut or an investment of some sort, will somehow affect in a very positive, constructive and clear way all of those who call Ontario home.

1610

I don't have to go very far but to look at my own political history and remember what one of the leaders of our movement had to say about that kind of economics some 30 or 40 years ago. When we forget our past, we live the chance that we'll revisit it again, and we may not have learned from it. Tommy Douglas at one point talked about the trickle-down theory of economics, where those at the top, if they're pleased, if they're getting enough return on their investment, if they're making ever-increasing profits with each year that goes by, continue to stay in the jurisdiction and do their work, and some of that creation works its way down, but in diminishing amounts as you get further and further away from the centre and the seat of power.

I think—and I believe I'm speaking on behalf of my own caucus—it would benefit us more, when we look at some of the initiatives we want to do as government, as we give leadership in a jurisdiction, to be asking the question, how does this affect the ordinary men and women who live in communities in our jurisdiction, places like Ottawa, Sault Ste Marie, Sudbury, Chapleau and Wawa? How does it affect those people? How are they going to benefit from this particular program?

It takes time; it takes effort. It's a lot of work sometimes to do that, but I think over a long period of time now we've built up government and given it the resources to do that work. This government doesn't seem to think it has that responsibility. If you'll remember, on a number of occasions they've come before this place to say that they weren't government and that they were here to change government. I suspect what they meant by that was that government was no longer going to make the effort necessary to understand what communities out there across this province need by way of leadership and programs from them. They have turned it around now and said, "OK, we'll turn it over to the corporate sector. We'll privatize those things that government has always done, and in the end it will work out so that all of us will benefit, and benefit more equally than if government was doing the job it was set up to do in the first place."

What leads me to believe that what this government is doing is not working out for the normal and regular folks who get up and go to work or look after their families from one day to the next in this province? Well, let me just look at one area. It's an area we've been highlighting lately in this caucus. It's an area that our critic for

community and social services, the member from Nickel Belt, has done a lot of work in. It's the area of child poverty, an indicator that I think we would all do well to have a really close look at. If we're not looking after our children, if we're not putting in place programs that support our children and present them with an opportunity to grow and learn and be healthy so they can take over when we get old and weak and not able to run the shop any more, what are we leaving for posterity?

We have reports that have been tabled around this place over the last couple of months that indicate to us that child poverty is still rampant in this province of plenty, this province where from one day to the next we read in the financial papers that big corporations make historically record-high profits one year over the next; some would say not only historically record-high profits but obscenely record-high profits, particularly when you consider the effect of taking that kind of money out of the system. That's how corporations make money: they take it out of communities by selling services or convincing people to invest in things. By not having a government in place that believes you should take some of the money that has been generated by the effort of everybody and return it in the way of programs that particularly serve young people and children, this is what you end up with.

In 1998, Ontario's economy grew by 4.5%, but 17.5% of Ontario's children lived in poor families. The number of poor children in Ontario grew by 91% between 1989 and 1998. The number of children in working-poor families grew by 103% between 1989 and 1998. The number of poor children, living in poverty, in families with full-time, year-round jobs—lest we get caught in that argument of families on assistance versus families who are working—grew by 48% between 1989 and 1998. Since 1989, Ontario had the biggest increase in the average depth of poverty in Canada. The depth of poverty grew from \$8,846 in 1989 to \$9,832 in 1998. Since 1996, Ontario and Newfoundland were the only provinces where the depth of poverty increased.

This is not something to be proud of. This is not something that should indicate to anybody looking at the indicators across this province that we are in fact doing well where giving leadership is concerned, where working with the corporations and people who work in communities and others are concerned, that we're delivering programs and operating as a government in a way that is benefiting everybody who calls Ontario home.

Yet what is it that this government does by way of a proposal to respond to the very difficult issue of child poverty in this province? Well, you know, another public relations exercise: Ontario's Promise. Harris and his henchmen have launched a children and youth initiative patterned after General Colin Powell's America's Promise in the US, which he says will help kids get off to the best start in life. But if you look at it close enough, you will realize that Powell's initiative in the States looks more promising to corporate Canada than it does to kids. That shouldn't surprise us, because that's the track record, that's the pattern of this government. It's been a

great public relations vehicle for ad agencies, hotels and other business ventures in the US. But has it reduced child poverty? Has it put more food in hungry children's mouths? Has it created a single extra licensed childcare space?

No, not one. These are the challenges we face in Ontario and we don't need to invest in a public relations vehicle for business to do it. In reality, Ontario's promise is just one more notch in the Harris government's real agenda to download responsibility for our children and youth on to business and not-for-profit community organizations.

Our children, we believe in this caucus, deserve a stronger promise than that. They deserve real government investment in things like expanded licensed childcare spaces, family resource centres, longer parental leave and an increase in the minimum wage, rent freezes, an increase in social assistance payments, as well as an end to the targeted attack on our teachers.

There is just so much more that we could do and there is so much more that I would like to talk about here, and hopefully we will have some opportunity to do, as my two or three years that I have left here unfold. But unfortunately in these last few months here we haven't had that opportunity to speak to almost anything of any real concern to this province.

Since September every piece of legislation that has been brought before this House has been rammed through by way of time allocation—every piece. Nothing that this government has brought before this House has been allowed to run its course in terms of dialogue and debate and input from both sides of this House. Minimal public hearings in some instances, for a couple of hours downstairs while the House is sitting, and then back into the House for third reading, banged through and done. That's it, take or leave it.

That doesn't provide for good public policy. It certainly doesn't reflect a government that's interested in looking at the issues that we've put on the table here where child poverty is concerned. There are so many other things: the issue of poverty itself never arrives at this table. We never have a debate on it; we never talk about it. It's out there, it's broader and it's deeper than it's ever been before. It seems in this place we have no appetite for a debate or a discussion about it or to do anything about it. It's rule by edict where poverty is concerned; it's rule by edict by this government where child poverty is concerned in particular.

I believe, for one, that it needs to come to an end, that we need to get our priorities straight. I suggest to this government, when you're looking at whatever you decide to do next, that you less ask yourselves, "What would the corporate world think about this? How would this play out for the big barons of industry?" and more and more ask, "How will this affect and improve the life of the ordinary man and woman in this province?" You will do better by all of us in the long run and Ontario will be a better place to live.

1620

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a privilege to speak here this afternoon for a few moments on the concurrences.

I was fortunate enough earlier today, after the bills and regulations meeting, to participate at the county of Simcoe inaugural, which was the 159th inaugural they've had since the formation of the county of Simcoe back in 1843. It was interesting to hear the member from Sault Ste Marie speak just previous to my comments. I remember that last year, before we adjourned for the winter recess, he talked about the great skiing conditions and so on they had in the Soo, and I'm really pleased that our winter season in Simcoe county is off to just a phenomenal start. They've received almost 30 inches of new snow. The ski resorts are all open, the snowmobile trails are open, and the cross-country trails are open.

Mr Beaubien: What about the hockey rink outside? Has it been shovelled?

Mr Dunlop: I'm hoping they'll have a very successful winter season, because the last three winters haven't been great for any of the businesses. And, yes, as I heard the member for Lambton say a few moments ago about the hockey rink, we have a number of hockey arenas open as well, so it should be a great winter. We've just come through a very successful summer as well.

On the way up the road today, what with all the snow—I want to acknowledge the fact that we have a private contractor, a company called Southfork Aggregates, and I want to pay a compliment to them on the condition they are keeping the 400 in. It's the first time I've been able to follow five plows at one time up the highway. I think they're doing a phenomenal job. They do slow the traffic down while they are looking after the road, but it was great to see them out clearing the road and putting a little bit of calcium on it this morning.

I just want to make a few comments on the county of Simcoe. As I've said many times in this House, it's my home riding, north Simcoe, and I've had a long history in municipal politics. I share that area with the members for Simcoe-Grey, Jim Wilson, and Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Joe Tascona. Neither Joe nor Jim was able to attend the inaugural, but I wanted to congratulate a number of the members from the county of Simcoe.

Today is the first time, I believe, in over 100 years that we've elected a warden for the second time, two consecutive years. Usually it's a one-year term.

I want to congratulate Robert Davis, the mayor of the township of Essa. He's done a great job for the past year, and he put his name forth for the second year and was successful in beating Mayor Ian Beard for the position today. Ian Beard is from the township of Oro-Medonte.

I also wanted to say that I heard a few comments today in the warden's address about some of the concerns the county has had. Certainly they are prepared to take on the ambulance delivery on January 1. They've had some concerns with the level of delivery of the service, and I myself have been working with the county over the last year on that. I'm hoping that will turn out to be very

successful, because most of the programs that the county of Simcoe does run, they do a very good job at.

I should say also that with the economy that we've had here in Ontario, the welfare rates have dropped in the last five years from 11,000 cases to 3,800 cases, so the economy in Simcoe is doing very well. As well, I think in every municipality the building permits have reached an all-time high in the last year.

I'd like to compliment a few of the returning members of county council. As you know, we restructured in 1994, and a number of the members have come back as mayors and deputy mayors, as well as a few new ones; for example, in the township of Adjala-Tosorontio, where there's a proposed landfill site going in that has been very controversial in that part of the riding. There is a lot of opposition to the landfill, but Mayor Tom Walsh is returning, along with newcomer Doug Little as the deputy mayor.

Back over in Clearview township, at the north end of Jim Wilson's riding, Mayor Bob McKee has returned as well. He also has a newcomer, Deputy Mayor Henry Versteegen, a resident of Creemore. As I said, Henry will be sitting as deputy mayor, and in Essa, Bob Davis and David Guergis have both returned.

I wanted to make a few comments about some of the other members as well. I know I have some time to share with the member for Northumberland; he'd like to make a few comments as well. But one of the things that was pointed out today, and again I think it's because of our strong economy—the county of Simcoe, as I have said on a number of occasions, has about 30,000 acres of forest that they harvest on a regular basis, and they keep a small staff on at the county. The warden announced today that they have taken in again, for this year, over \$1 million in revenues from the sale of forestry products. I thought that was exceptional. That money goes into reserves for specialty items. I know they have used it in the past for a number of different programs, but usually they try to purchase a bit more property with that on a year-to-year basis. I'm glad to see that once again they've had a successful year. Because of the economy and the demand for forestry products, it's important that we look at programs like the county of Simcoe's forestry program. I believe it's the only one of its kind in Ontario. Certainly there are other counties and regions that have some forestry products but nothing similar to what the county of Simcoe has.

I was glad to see as well today representatives from the city of Orillia and the city of Barrie: Mayor Stevens from the city of Orillia and Mayor Jim Perri, both of whom are newly elected. They were both at the inaugural and talked very briefly about the strong economy that we're working in and the number of building permits and the need for good planning and solid environmental policies. I was glad to hear their comments.

Certainly everyone we talk to as members has concerns about local services realignment, but with the economy that we have grown here in Ontario, with the growth of assessment because of building permits, with the

reduction in welfare cases throughout almost all of our regions, most of our municipalities have actually seen declines in their taxation rates. I'm very pleased to hear that. We're always worried about a decline in the economy, and we're hoping that the type of economy we have here in Ontario is more recession-proof than some of the economies we've seen across the rest of the country.

It was interesting today—in fact, the whip just told me a few minutes ago—that Paul Martin, my understanding is, has made an announcement on a \$250 rebate for heating homes this winter. I think that's a good move. I think it's an exceptional move, but I wonder where he got the idea. I wonder where the idea came from. Has anybody got any ideas on that? Where do you think the idea really came from? Of course, the \$200 dividend cheques that we gave out to five million Ontarians was a phenomenal idea. It was very successful. The money was used in a number of areas. Again, like tax cuts, like everything we do in our province under the leadership of Mike Harris and Finance Minister Eves, I'm glad to see that Minister Martin has taken a lead from us and is going to use this \$250 rebate.

I think it's good. I know that home heating costs have gone up because of the increase in energy prices, and I believe that it's strong leadership on Paul Martin's part to introduce this. I'm pleased to see it for people right across our country. Again, I thank Ernie Eves, our finance minister, for his leadership in showing Paul Martin that this type of program can work.

I want to say very briefly that it was a pleasure to attend the inaugural at the county of Simcoe today. I believe that part of Ontario is in good condition. They've got strong leadership from all the municipal politicians up there.

Mr Speaker, I know you left the House after your speech, and I want to say, with the snow-making and the winter sports, we're already off to a good start in my part of Ontario. I hope the same thing is happening in the Soo, because we need all those revenues coming into this province from those Americans who want to come skiing and snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. I hope we're off to a great winter for all our tourism operators.

With that, I don't know, is Mr Galt here yet? I don't see the member from Northumberland.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: That's right. He's not speaking right after me.

With that I'll sit down, and again I compliment the county of Simcoe for their great inaugural, their 159th inaugural, and for the fact that they keep going as a strong municipality in our province.

1630

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Since we're talking about festivals in our communities, I would invite everyone to the Festival of Lights at Fort Henry this year, which is a new event. They've lit up all of Fort Henry in festive Christmas decorations. It's a festival that will go on for a total of six weeks. I would encourage all of the people in eastern Ontario who would

like to take a look at the fort in the wintertime, which isn't the usual way in which the fort is presented, to do that.

Having said that, let me quickly turn to something the member who spoke just before I got up mentioned, dealing with the \$250 rebate the federal government is giving to individual taxpayers for heating costs. The main difference is that the blame for the skyrocketing electricity costs and the skyrocketing energy costs can all be laid at the feet of one person and one government, and that's the government sitting right across the aisle. It's a totally different situation than the \$200 rebate that was just given out to everybody, when the provincial government would have been much better off to put it strictly on the debt of the province and thereby reduce the debt by \$1 billion. There's quite a difference between the \$250 that Martin is now giving to people who really need the money to pay for the escalating energy costs and the other situation we talked about earlier.

Let's admit the economy is doing good for a lot of people, but I found it very fascinating yesterday sitting in the House here when a question was asked of the Premier about the 100,000 children who are still on social assistance, who are living well below the poverty level, and what the Premier was prepared to do for those children by way of a cost-of-living increase in the social assistance payments. He didn't even address the issue. He basically said there are fewer people on social assistance and therefore there's no need to do anything by way of a cost-of-living increase, which of course completely discounts the notion that there are still 100,000 children in this province who are living below the poverty level, who are still on social assistance. He didn't even answer that question.

Speaker, those children, you and I know, are a lot worse off than they were five or six years ago. They've suffered the 21% decrease in social assistance payments that occurred in 1995, and there has been absolutely no cost-of-living increase for them. As you so aptly pointed out when you spoke to this bill earlier, since 1989, over the last 10 years, I believe you said there was a 48% to 50% increase in the number of children living in poverty in this province. That, surely to goodness, in a country and in a province that has as much to offer as we have here in Ontario, is totally and completely unacceptable.

I say to the government, do all these things you want for your business friends. You've done it for the last five years. Continue to do that. But also think about the most needy in our community, particularly at this time of year. Surely a society ultimately will be judged by what it does for or how it affects the most needy in that society. Those people, Speaker, as you and I know, have been completely and totally ignored by this government. That I find totally unacceptable. If we've got such a great economy, and if the money is just rolling into the provincial coffers, why do we have chaos in education, why do we have chaos in the health care system?

When I take a look at my own community, we've always had a good medical health science complex. It's

the fifth-largest one in Ontario. It's attached to a quality medical school that has been operating for the last 100 to 125 or 150 years. It's something we're extremely proud of in our community. But let there be no doubt about it: over the last five years, on an annual operating basis, the hospitals in my community have lost anywhere from \$25 million to \$40 million per year, depending on whose figures you want to believe. A minimum of \$25 million per year has in effect been taken out of my community in the hospital care that people demand on an ongoing basis. How is that \$25 million translated? What does that translate into? It translates into jobs and services. There are fewer nurses, there are fewer health care workers, there are fewer doctors, requiring longer waiting periods for people to be treated and shorter stays in hospital, and they are sent home a lot quicker than ever used to be the case. When they do go home, quite often there isn't community care available for them, as had been promised under the CCACs.

I feel particularly sorry for and have sympathy with those individuals who get sent home and don't have anybody to look after them in their home environment. Yes, theoretically in a perfect world we would want all of these people who are sent home quickly and early out of the hospital to go back to a home environment where somebody could look after them, whether it's a spouse, whether it's a parent, whether it's a child. But a lot of people aren't that fortunate, and the most they can get from the CCACs is maybe one or two hours of care either per day or per week, depending upon their circumstances.

So I say to the government, if you really want to get through with all of your health restructuring, and it looks now as if it's certainly going to happen—it's already happened in a lot of communities—then at least do the right thing, what Duncan Sinclair told you right from the very beginning. You cannot restructure the hospital system, you cannot close hospitals, you cannot cut down the number of hospital beds in particular areas in communities without making sure the community nursing and home care is available for people. We all realize that it may very well be a lot less expensive for people to take care of them as they are recuperating in their home rather than the hospital. I'm all for that, provided the services are available for these individuals. That's where this government continues to fail the people of Ontario.

As a matter of fact, in the Kingston area they're all talking about the one new hospital that's going to be built, probably on the psychiatric hospital grounds, although it may be located somewhere else, at a cost of \$180 million. That will then take the place of the current Hotel Dieu Hospital, which will be shut down after serving our local community for over 150 years, and St Mary's of the Lake Hospital. Right now there is a survey going on by a consulting firm as to how the local community can raise the \$60 million that, as you know, under the health restructuring guidelines is the local component that people in effect have to put into it. I'll tell you, it's going to be extremely rough and tough for a community the size of the Kingston area and the larger surrounding

area to raise \$60 million. The national foundations and the provincial foundations won't be available to the same extent they were before, because just about every community in Ontario is going through exactly the same thing.

I know what will happen eventually, and I talk about this at just about every opportunity in my local community because I think the people of my community have to understand that an awful lot of the local dollar component will probably end up on the property tax rolls, because appeals will be made to councils, in effect, to commit to \$20 million, \$30 million or \$40 million to be raised by the local property taxpayers. It's been done before. It was done during the time when I was mayor, but then we were talking about amounts that were much smaller than what we're talking about now. I believe in those days we were talking in terms of \$10 million. Now we're talking about \$60 million that has to be raised from the local community.

So there are some major concerns there. Many people in my community are still asking, "Why do we need a new hospital? Wouldn't it be a lot better to put this money back into the operating budgets of the hospitals so we can hire the nurses, hire the doctors, hire the health care workers so that there aren't excessive waiting times for people to get treatment in the hospital? Shouldn't that be the first priority before we start talking about new facilities?"

So I say to this government, yes, things may be looking up for some people and, yes, some people are benefiting from your new budget, but never forget the people who are at the bottom end of the economic scale, because we ultimately will be judged by how we treat the least fortunate in our society.

1640

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate today, which deals with the spending of this government in a number of ministries across a number of areas that affect thousands and thousands of Ontarians. I think I will spend the time I have today focusing particularly on kids.

I do that because, in the face of what has been quite substantial and prolonged prosperity in this province, our kids are being left behind. We leave Ontario's children behind at our peril. I am really concerned, when I look at the cuts that this government has made to children since it has been the government, that we are losing an entire generation of children. When kids go to school hungry because their moms can't afford to feed them because of social assistance cuts, they can't learn very well at school; and when they go to school hungry or when they are just generally hungry, they are going to have to use the health care system all that much more frequently; and when they aren't doing well in school and are ill and can't attend school, we're much more likely to have children drop out of school, and then we're going to increase the incidents we have, I think, with the criminal justice system. We certainly aren't going to give them a

good head start when it comes to being productive in the economy.

But you see, the problem is that in spite of the incredible prosperity, this government couldn't care less about the generation of children that I am convinced we are losing right now. If the government really cared at all, even cared a little bit, about some of the kids who are living on social assistance or some of the kids who are living in working poor families in this province, then this government would have a strategy to respond to that poverty, to bring those kids and their working families out of that poverty, or to respond to the fact that so many moms on social assistance are having to take their kids to food banks in this province in order just to feed them. If the government cared at all, even a little bit, then the government would have a strategy to deal with the poorest kids in our community. But the government doesn't have any kind of strategy to deal with the poorest kids. Frankly, the government doesn't have much of a strategy to deal with kids at all, but in terms of the poorest, the most vulnerable, the group that the government has an enormous responsibility for, this government is doing nothing.

I want to use the time I have today to focus on some of what the government has done with respect to kids—clearly that means cuts to service levels and to programs—and then what the government hasn't done, despite all of its rhetoric especially from the Premier in the last little while about how they care so much about kids. Frankly, what the government hasn't done to deal specifically and particularly with the incredible poverty that we are seeing in this province has been well documented.

Let me begin with the cuts. What did the government do? One of the first things the government did when it was elected—it was just a couple of months after it was elected in October 1995—was to cut social assistance rates by almost 22%—21.7% to be exact. In doing that, in getting at those moms on welfare, the government got at 400,000 children who belonged to those moms on welfare. Some 400,000 children were affected by those particular cuts. Those cuts were very deep, and frankly they were pretty vicious, because the government, in trying to get welfare moms off the system, forgot that those very same moms are also responsible for all of those children. So the government attacked them too.

We have seen since that time—and it has been well documented both by the Daily Bread Food Bank and all of its associated food banks—that throughout this whole period since the time of those cuts, there has been an increase in users of food banks represented by moms and kids on social assistance. That has been very clearly documented. That has come specifically from the period when the government cut those rates. We see in the last two reports that now not only are women and children overwhelmingly using the food banks—women and children who are on assistance and who, even if with the assistance, don't have enough money to feed their kids. Now you see any number of seniors who are using food

banks as well because in light of their meagre pensions, all the things the government has downloaded to municipalities that have resulted in increased user fees and increased property taxes have really affected that category of people in our communities too.

What was really disturbing in the last report that was released, just in the last two months, by the Daily Bread Food Bank and all of its associated food banks across the province was the dramatic increase in the use of food banks in northern Ontario, in our part of the province—a 15% increase in the number of moms and kids coming to food banks in northern Ontario. For all of the talk about boom, in the last year in our part of the province that boom certainly hasn't resulted in less kids being less hungry. In fact, we've seen quite a dramatic increase; an increase in northern Ontario that Sue Cox, when she was interviewed, couldn't even begin to explain as to why such a dramatic increase over a one-year period in a part of the province that allegedly is doing so well economically.

Very early on the government also decided it knew best how to run the then family support plan. Overnight, the Attorney General decided that he would close all of the regional offices of the family support plan, lay off 85% of the staff and somehow women and kids were still going to get the support payments that they were owed. You'll remember that fiasco in the fall of 1996 when the then-Attorney General made such a precipitous decision that was so negative and so detrimental. You remember the people coming into your office, Speaker, people coming into mine; women and kids who regularly got their support payments without a problem suddenly not knowing where those payments were. The payments were still being deducted from the payers' cheques but they were going into the black hole and that black hole was that office up at Downsview. The office up at Downsview that my good friend and colleague Mr Kormos and I visited early one morning in November to discover that in fact there was nothing working, nothing in operation, nothing functioning. We had a whole space there that the government was claiming support payments were moving in and out of, when there wasn't even a computer set up, a telephone set up, there certainly weren't any staff working, and boxes and boxes of files from right across the province, stacked from the floor to the ceiling, clearly all having to do with recipients who should have been receiving money and weren't because of a precipitous action made by the then-Attorney General, who never cared to listen to anyone, much less his own management staff at the senior level who told him not to do this and he did anyway; all to find some savings at the family support plan to help the government finance the tax cuts.

You know what? The closing of those regional offices, has meant that system has never worked the same. Before the government took that action, we used to get, on average, five calls a month with respect to the family support plan. Now, we are still usually averaging 25 to 30 calls—FRO cases, continuing problems, problems of

access—specifically because in Sudbury we used to have a regional office and now we don't, courtesy of this government. You can't go to Downsview to get over-the-counter service. The best you can do is fax or phone and hope someone might actually pick up the phone or fax you back, which doesn't normally happen. During that whole period of time, just to save some money at the family support plan, the government caused thousands and thousands and thousands of women and children to be placed in a desperate financial situation by not receiving the support payments that they were due and entitled to. It's the responsibility of this government to guarantee that those support payments are made, and it was this government—directly—which was responsible for ensuring that didn't happen. And still today we see the consequences of that with respect to service that is nowhere near the level that it used to be, especially in those regions that used to have regional offices.

This government made cuts to counselling at second-stage housing. Can you imagine? You've got families who have suffered once at the hands of their abuser, perhaps a father, perhaps a common-law spouse, perhaps just someone who lived in the house along with kids. They have suffered that abuse, and then when they flee with their mom to a shelter and get through that initial period of being in a shelter and try and move on to second-stage housing in a sheltered and protected environment so they can make the transition back into the community, this government decides to cut all funding for counselling at that second-stage housing. Now, isn't there anything more ridiculous than that? More vicious? I don't know what purpose it serves. I just can't figure it out.

We should be doing everything we can to support women who are finally in a position to escape, take their kids out of that dangerous situation, take themselves out of that dangerous situation, try to make a new life for themselves in the community. They need ongoing support at all levels to be able to make that transition, and what did this government do? It cancelled all of the funding for that counselling and has yet to replace it, and I don't think it ever will, despite the fact it is one of the measures that the emergency measures task force, representing a coalition of over 100 women's organization, has requested this government specifically to do, I don't think they will.

1650

With respect to social assistance or the working poor, this government took away the drug cards for working poor families. There you have families probably working at minimum wage, probably working two and three part-time jobs trying to make ends meet, trying to stay off social assistance. They could at least count on that drug card to know that the meagre wage they were earning was not going to be eaten up by prescription drug costs and by costs for expensive medication for their kids. What did this government do? It took away the drug card for working families. What point that serve? Who does that help? The government surely can't tell me that it

costs oh, so much to provide a drug card to working poor families in this province that they had to cut it as an expenditure measure. The government just can't tell me that, especially in light of the prosperity that we've seen. It was just a nasty, vicious, mean-spirited thing to do, especially to families that were actually trying to make ends meet and trying to stay off assistance, who required a little extra help for medication for their kids—and God knows how expensive medication is. The government took that away too.

The government claws back, for example, the national child benefit from families on social assistance in this province. This is a benefit that was established by the federal government to help those neediest families in our province. This government made a conscious decision that instead of allowing the neediest, the poorest families in our community, primarily those on social assistance, to actually receive this national child benefit—this government claws it back if you're on social assistance. How pathetic is that? How much more can you just kick in the head people on social assistance, and why? What does it buy this government to go after women and kids? I can't figure this out. I can't figure out what it is that gives this government such a thrill to take money from the lowest, in terms of income level group, in the province; to take a benefit that they were not paying for. The federal government was paying for it; it wasn't even Ontario's money. But no, they made a decision that for those on social assistance, "We'll go at them one more time, yet again. We're going to claw that money back."

Do you know what I think they did, which is even more pathetic? They used the money that they clawed back from social assistance recipients, federal money, and a little bit of money they had in the Ontario child tax credit, and they made a new program which they call the Ontario child care supplement for working families. That supplement that goes out to working poor families, one notch above the really poor on social assistance—part of the money that goes to those working poor families actually was stolen from, ripped off from those people on social assistance who should have got that money from the federal government. Talk about working your way up the food chain in terms of attacking those on the very bottom and then moving up from there.

What is it that's progressive about taking child care money that's destined for social assistance recipients, stealing it from them, and then creating a new program to give that money to those folks in the working poor who are one notch up above social assistance recipients? You would think this government, given the economic prosperity, certainly would have the money to do both, to allow those on social assistance to keep the benefit that the federal government was giving to them and to create, if they wanted to, a child care benefit for other working families with the funds it already had, funds that it took from the child care benefit that it already had.

The government as well cut the \$37 monthly supplement for pregnant moms to help them buy fruit and vegetables. I remember when the Premier did that, he

said, "We're taking away pregnant moms' beer money." You remember that, Speaker; that nasty, mean-spirited comment that he made in the paper about why the government was doing it: "We're taking away their beer money." You just look at that and you listen to that and you listen to this Premier who says he cares so much about kids, and you have to shake your head. You have to shake your head at how mean and nasty that action was—and from the Premier of the province. To just categorize all moms on social assistance who were getting 37 lousy dollars more a month for fruit and vegetables as all they were using that money to do was to buy beer was just so low and so disgusting. The problem is, though, it's typical of how this government has reacted to people on social assistance since they have been the government. I think that's a really sad state of affairs, when the government, that's supposed to look after those who are poorest and most vulnerable have that kind of sick attitude toward them.

The government has done any number of things. Those are just a few that I've highlighted. The government made cuts to any number of youth programs that were run by the John Howard Society, the Little Beavers program that was in place for aboriginal kids in our community. The government made all those cuts within the first six months they were in government, really demonstrating how much they care about kids.

All these things come home to roost because here we are, five and six years later, after the government has been making some of these cuts, and clearly in the last two months there have been at least three different reports that have showed very clearly that there has been a huge negative, detrimental impact on kids as a result. One of those reports was released by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres. They looked specifically at native urban poverty, off-reserve kids, and what supports there were or weren't for those kids.

I had a chance to meet with the executive director, Sylvia Maracle, and other representatives from the friendship centre, those involved in the study, and listened with profound dismay to the results of the work they did—direct interviews with moms on social assistance, direct interviews with native organizations and agencies providing services to aboriginal kids in urban settings—and it was frankly very disturbing, about the level, because if we think kids on social assistance in white communities are poor, it's even worse in native communities.

They made it very clear that moms on social assistance didn't have the money they needed to feed their kids and were trying to access support from food banks all over this city and many others. Kids were having any number of difficulties in school and parents were having trouble keeping their kids in school. Some of the programs that used to be there to support kids, like the Little Beavers program, have been cut by this government, and on and on.

The level of poverty among native children is something we have to deal with. It is not solely a federal gov-

ernment responsibility. There are many areas where we could and should be providing support to native families off-reserve and we aren't doing that, and that level of poverty is just going to grow as a result.

A couple of weeks ago Campaign 2000 and any number of its associated agencies were here to release its report on child poverty. You know, Speaker, because you were there, that they used the most recent statistics from Statistics Canada to talk about the level of child poverty. Now maybe the government wants to get up and say that Statistics Canada doesn't know what it's talking about—I invite the government to do so—but that's the work they used. That's the basis upon which they made the statements they did, that was the body of evidence, the body of work they worked with to release their report. They said the following:

"Using the most recent statistics from Statistics Canada, we know that 470,000 children in this province live in poverty; one of every five children in this province remains poor, despite the good economic times; one in three of those poor children comes from a working family; and since 1996, only Newfoundland and Ontario have been the two provinces in Canada where families are sinking deeper into poverty."

Some 470,000 children in this province are still living in poverty; one of every three of those kids is from a working family, not a family on social assistance but a working family, one of those same families that have had their drug cards cut by this government. Only in Newfoundland and Ontario—isn't that a record to be proud of? With Newfoundland we are the only other province in this great country where working families and families generally are sinking into even deeper poverty.

How is it that we find ourselves in the company of Newfoundland in terms of dealing with child poverty? Surely the economic situation in this province is a bit better than that of Newfoundland, and yet we are one of but two provinces where families are sinking deeper and deeper into that hole, despite the economic times.

As I said to you, the Premier pooh-pooed the results that came forward from Campaign 2000, except he really isn't in a position to do that because the statistics come directly from Statistics Canada. They're not something Campaign 2000 made up. They're not something they thought about one night when they were all sitting at a table discussing child poverty. The body of evidence they used to make their declarations came from statistics they obtained from Statistics Canada. The evidence is clear: in incredible economic times here, our kids are moving deeper into poverty. How is that? Why is it we're allowing it to happen?

You were at a press conference, Speaker, two weeks ago, downstairs in the media studio, where yet another coalition of poverty activists came to this assembly and also talked about all of their results with respect to poverty and how this government's deregulation of rent controls, this government's cuts to social assistance etc, were driving families deeper and deeper into poverty.

1700

I know, Speaker, you had a chance to speak to a number of the people who were here to express their concerns. In the last two months at least three different groups of people, using different sets of information, came to the same conclusion: that in the midst of really good economic times, our kids in this province are moving deeper and deeper into poverty, and the government doesn't seem to want to do anything about that. In fact, a lot of what the government does is contributing to that poverty.

I said earlier I wanted to talk about what the government is doing; it's better to say what the government is not doing, because clearly that is the problem. A couple of weeks ago the Premier in a big public relations display down at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre announced Ontario's Promise—this is an idea he has stolen from the United States—whereby he is going to urge more people in the community to do more for children. I was at the launch. As I said, it was quite a public relations exercise. It was really an exercise in this government offloading its responsibility for kids on to someone else. That's really at the heart of it.

The government, through this PR exercise, is going to try and encourage businesses, the faith community, volunteer organizations and service clubs in our communities to do more with respect to our kids. Well, the partner that's been missing in action for the last five years in this effort is the Ontario government. That's the group that's been missing in action in the last five years with respect to kids. I'm convinced—because I know my own community—that as this government has made cuts in services to kids, it is businesses in our community, it is the faith community, it is volunteer groups and service organizations that have been picking up the pieces over the last five years to fill in where this government has offloaded. They don't need to be told by this government what they should be doing. They are already doing what they should be doing. Frankly, they're doing more than what they should be doing, and they're doing it because this government has been nowhere to be seen on any number of fronts with respect to kids, especially poor kids.

I understand the Speaker was at the Royal Bank—was it yesterday or on Monday?—making an announcement with respect to his partner and how much the Royal Bank was doing. I wish the Premier would get up in this House and tell us what his government is doing with respect to kids, not what he's asking everyone else to do, which is his responsibility to assume.

The government ought to be careful about some of the partners it pulls in to do some of this work. What is interesting about America's Promise is that immediately after this launch was made, they got some information about one of the corporate partners in America's Promise in the United States. One of them, a telecommunications company called Verizon long distance, had 37,000 workers on strike this summer, primarily women. They were on strike because they were refusing to do the man-

datory overtime hours every week that the company demanded, over and above their regular hours of work. I think it was 15 extra hours of mandatory overtime every week.

They were refusing to do that because, as they are primarily female workers, they wanted to spend some time with their kids. They had to go on strike this summer against Verizon so they could beat back the company's demands with respect to even more overtime. This is one of the partners in America's Promise, a corporation that's supposed to be so concerned about kids. Look at that family policy in the workplace. Imagine your workers having to go on strike to try and beat back demands on overtime so they can spend some time with their kids.

We want to be really careful with this exercise from two perspectives: (1) we continue to point out that the government's exercise in Ontario's Promise is really nothing more than offloading the Ontario government's responsibility when it comes to children and letting someone else in the community pick that up; (2) I'd advise this government to be very careful about some of its corporate partners that are involved. What the government doesn't want is to find itself embarrassed, as I think Colin Powell was, by finding out that some of its corporate partners didn't have, oh, so very friendly workplace policies when it came to families and kids, despite all their rhetoric about caring for kids.

That's a public relations exercise and I'm sure we'll hear a lot more about that and see the Premier at a number of other photo opportunities with some of his corporate partners. It will be nice to see when the Premier is actually going to make some kind of specific announcement himself about funding for children instead of expecting everyone else to do that for him.

This government had Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain do a very important report on early childhood development and early childhood initiatives. What is so regrettable is that after that very important work, which I have no doubt those two individuals took great care to complete, that report sits on the shelf. The government has not responded to the recommendations that were in it.

The government has established a working group that is supposed to make some kind of recommendations next May, about 18 months after the report was initially tabled with this government. Why would it take at least 18 months for the government to respond to some very important points and recommendations that were made by experts in the field of early childhood development? How could the government possibly defend a delay of that magnitude when the two made very clear what was needed, what had to be done?

We know the government has the money to fund these initiatives. Instead of actually taking some action in response to this important report, the government lets it sit on the shelf while they have a working group doing some things on the side that may or may not report by May 2001. I hope they do, but if the government were seriously committed to kids, it would have acted

immediately on the recommendations made by these two very fine individuals. The length of the delay, the magnitude of it, undermines any credibility the government might think it has with respect to really caring for kids. If you care about kids, you get on with recommendations made to you by the experts on how to support kids, especially kids aged 0 to 6, in their early years. The government hasn't done that.

I've heard the minister responsible for children's issues talk about her early years challenge fund. She used it again last week in defence of doing nothing on behalf of kids, in a question I raised about whether or not the government would follow through on recommendations made by the Education Improvement Commission with respect to early childhood development. The minister talked about the early years challenge fund and everything that was being done with it. Do you know what the fact is about the early years challenge fund? It was announced in the May 1999 budget—not a penny was spent. It was reannounced in the May 2000 budget—not a penny was spent. Last week, on the very same day the Education Improvement Commission released its report and said the government should finally stop the rhetoric and act on early childhood development—imagine this, Speaker—the government reannounced for the third time the early years challenge fund. This time they announced that the application forms for this fund might soon be ready and they might actually fund something in the year 2001, a full two years after it was first announced.

There is the poor minister responsible for children's issues trying to defend herself, using that as an example. How pathetic. Poor minister. If that's the only thing she's got to rely on, she's got a serious problem. Not a single penny has been spent on this fund that was supposed to fund proposals to help kids in their early years. It was announced in 1999, reannounced, and last week they said application forms might soon be ready. The government is doing nothing with this fund and nothing on any kind of new initiatives with respect to children.

Look at regulated child care. One of the recommendations the Education Improvement Commission made last week was for this government to give a good start, not only to kids in the education system itself but to those kids coming into the education system, to make sure the supports were in place so they had a good start when they started school. They made a very specific recommendation, that access should be available to high-quality child care at a very affordable rate.

Do you know what's interesting? If you look at the actual expenditures of this government on regulated child care, you will see that between 1995 and 1998, actual government expenditures on regulated child care decreased by 15%. So in the first three years this government was in office, those expenditures on regulated child care, something the government's own Education Improvement Commission called on the government to expand, those expenditures in that important area actually decreased by 15%.

What's also interesting to note is that there was no mention of any new funding for regulated child care in the May 2000 budget. Despite recommendations made by McCain-Mustard, despite these recommendations that have now come out by the Education Improvement Commission, recommendations that really followed on the commissions we established in 1994 that reported, there was no new money for regulated child care in the May 2000 budget.

What's more interesting is that the government now has an opportunity to do something about regulated child care, and we have heard nothing from this government in this respect. There has been silence.

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Earlier this summer, in August, I believe, or early September, the ministers across this country, the Prime Minister and the Premiers, made an announcement that they were all committed to early childhood development initiatives. They announced that, over a five-year period, \$2.2 billion would be spent by the federal government on early childhood initiatives. Ontario stands to gain about \$900 million of those dollars over the next five years.

We certainly know that the Coalition for Better Child Care has called on this government to spend a significant portion of that money on regulated child care to increase the number of spaces in this province for parents who are in need. But to date—and the minister is here in this House—we've heard nothing about how this government intends to spend this money that's coming from the federal government. Frankly, I'd like to hear how the government's going to spend it. I'd like to hear how they're going to match it, how they're going to match what the feds have provided us, and provide significant early childhood development initiatives in this province, be it in regulated child care spaces, which I certainly hope it will be, be it in early learning centres, which I certainly hope it would be, be it in any number of the things that the ministers when they made the agreement said they were going to fund. But we have heard nothing from this government, in spite of the fact that the money is sitting there.

Now this, from a government that is very quick to criticize the federal government on health care—they have a right to do so—very quick and very prompt to criticize that the federal government isn't anteing up, isn't providing money for health care and in fact has cut health care spending. But when the government has an opportunity at its disposal, in its hands right now, this Conservative government has been silent on what it wants to do to take that federal money in order to benefit children. It certainly has been silent on any suggestion that it, itself, during this great economic time might actually put its money on the table, match the federal contribution, do something really important, really big and really serious for our children in this province. There has been nothing. So we wait some more.

I want to end in the time that I have by saying that I focused on kids because of the evidence that we have seen in the last two months from reputable organizations.

from people who care, from front-line workers, from people who are dealing with poor children every day, that things are getting worse, not better, for children on social assistance and for children in working poor families in this province, and this is happening despite the fact that this government has experienced economic times that have been very good, economic times that have been very significant. We know this government has the money to deal with these problems, and the government refuses to do so.

If the government wanted to do something to help poor kids, they would raise the shelter allowance for social assistance recipients; they would raise the minimum wage; they would give back the health care cards for families who are working poor; they would stop the clawback of the national child benefit; they would regulate rent controls in this province so families aren't losing where they live and a shelter; they would provide money for counselling at second-stage housing. There are any number of these things this government can do if they really care about kids. The problem is, they don't care. That's the real problem.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I certainly appreciate the opportunity to be able to join in the debate on concurrence. Today I want to really focus on some of the major initiatives that our government has brought forward, initiatives particularly in rural Ontario.

Before I really get into that, I'd like to compliment the member for Durham for his very kind remarks about what's happening in agriculture in rural Ontario and particularly about my riding and myself. It's certainly great to hear somebody like that recognizing the importance of rural Ontario and what our government is indeed doing for rural Ontario and for agriculture in particular.

In the current economic boom, large urban centres like Toronto are growing and prospering. Rural Ontario is also doing well, but not to the same extent. This growth is not consistent in rural Ontario, as it is in urban areas. We need to make sure that the barriers to rural economic renewal and job creation are indeed being tackled. We're already doing this. The initiatives that I will talk about today underline the fact that we are doing our part in rural Ontario.

I'd like to draw your attention first to the editorial in this month's issue put out by the corn producers. Although I give them credit for praising some of our initiatives since we first came to office back in 1995, it also makes some non-factual and misguided arguments about our efforts in rural Ontario. As a government member who represents a rural riding and also chairs the Premier's Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal, I can assure you that we take pride in our record for rural Ontario. Compliments to the Premier in demonstrating his concern for small-town and rural Ontario and developing a task force to review this issue. Obviously he has the foresight to see ahead and look after small-town and rural Ontario.

I would like to spend a few minutes highlighting 18 initiatives that have happened since 1995 and sort of

draw a comparison with when an insurance company asks you to have a look at your house and identify some of your assets. You go around with a video camera or a regular camera and you take pictures of various rooms and write down the values, and it's quite a surprise to you when you really find out how much you have in that home.

Talking about some of the initiatives that have happened here in Ontario to help small-town and rural Ontario, the first one I think of is the \$15 million invested in Grow Ontario. That came out back in the 1996 budget. It was all about the competitiveness of Ontario products, developing markets for these products that result in new agri-food products being brought to market. Some 150 projects were undertaken as a result of this funding initiative.

Another one that comes to mind is the northern Ontario infrastructure program. A total of \$138 million was allocated back in 1996 to the repaving and repairing of roads in northern Ontario. I think of a road from Dryden to Sioux Lookout, some hour's drive, just a disastrous road, left by the previous administration in this province. That road is now just a beautiful road to drive on. That's just one example that I'm familiar with.

Another one that our government brought in, a third one, is rural youth employment program support. In 1997, some \$3 million was allocated to the creation of 3,000 summer jobs for our young people.

Again in 1997 in that budget, an additional \$2.5 million was dedicated to covering the costs of business start-up loans for our youth. Another approximately 3,000 jobs were created because of that.

In the spring of 2000, the government of Ontario extended its support to rural youth by providing wage supplements to employers in rural Ontario who were willing to hire students.

Just looking along, a fourth one was the whole farm relief program. This was some \$182 million in disaster relief back in 1999, and that was over a five-year period. When joined with the federal government, that means some \$455 million to recognize disaster relief for our Ontario farmers.

A fifth one we might talk about is agriculture and rural research in agri-food lab services. On an annual basis, some \$65 million goes into this. Most definitely, the agriculture sector and rural communities benefited as a result of this investment.

The sixth one would be a food safety program. Our government has made a commitment to invest some \$50 million over three years in the area of food safety and food research and those related areas. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is working with several other provincial ministries to continue strengthening Ontario's food safety program. This involves the planning and implementation of enhancements to ensure a seamless, science-based, field-to-port system that protects public health and supports the agri-food industry and the rural economy.

There's also a tremendous investment in telecommunications infrastructure. In the 1999 budget, the province and Bell Canada invested \$7.3 million and \$8 million respectively to extend high-speed data service to rural and small-town Ontario communities. This initiative has meant telecommunications services for some 270 more rural communities. I believe this is indeed positive news for our rural communities, as it contributes greatly to breaking down the barriers of isolation that many have been facing.

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There's another one that a lot of us in this House are interested in, and that's the horse racing industry. Some 20% of provincial revenue generated from slot machines at racetracks now goes back to the racetrack industry. The 2000 budget committed an estimated \$138 million for the horse racing sector. The slot machine initiative is expected to preserve some 45,000 jobs in the Ontario horse racing sector, with as many as 7,000 new jobs created. It is worth noting that the horse racing sector constitutes the province's third-largest agricultural industry.

Looking at the northern Ontario heritage fund, in the 2000 budget we committed some \$300 million over five years as part of a renewed mandate for the northern Ontario heritage fund. This funding commitment is intended to ensure that northern Ontario communities become full participants in Ontario's strong economy.

One that I was quite excited about in the last budget was the rural school transportation, some \$23 million that was set aside. In my own board, they were not spending all the dollars that were set aside in the previous budget. In my own board, another \$750,000 approximately came out, so they had roughly another \$1 million to spend on transportation this year over what was spent last year.

There's also the rural youth job strategy over a four-year period, some \$35 million, and that came out in the 1998 budget. Applications are continuing to be accepted up until March 31, 2001, with payments going as long as March 31, 2002.

The 12th one I'd like to speak on is the rural job strategy fund. This is a three-year program. Some \$30 million on rural job strategy was announced back in the 1997 budget, and it was designed to invest in projects that deal with quality enhancement, marketing and information technology to create jobs and increase exports, lead to investment, contribute to rural economic development and create alliances and other partnerships. The total value of the approved projects is some \$163 million, of which the RJSF contribution is approximately \$28.6 million.

Another special project was healthy futures, an investment of some \$90 million. That was announced in December 1999, with the goal of providing funding assistance to projects that will enhance the quality and safety of food supplies and safeguard rural water quality and increase access to domestic and international markets.

The 14th one is a very, very special one for me, the Ontario small town and rural program, otherwise known as OSTAR. This is a result of the Premier's task force that I chair, the Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal. You will remember back in August the announcement of some \$240 million out of that OSTAR funding for health and safety issues, essentially going for water and sewage treatment plants, as well as for bridges in rural Ontario. Also, \$104,000 was set aside recently for Women and Rural Economic Development, and this came through the Ontario Women's Directorate. This is certainly going to be very helpful for rural economic development. This Women and Rural Economic Development is an organization which often partners with other economic development organizations in implementing projects.

There's also, you will recall, the retail sales tax exemption for farm building construction materials that we made permanent in the last budget. There's also the agri-food and rural business bill that we passed way back in 1996 to get rid of some of the barriers in agriculture and also to set up Agricorp at that time.

Last but certainly not least is the business community economic development support, a number of federal departments and provincial ministries that recognize the importance of economic development, certainly OMAFRA staff at field offices throughout rural Ontario.

In conclusion, I'm extremely pleased with the initiatives that our government has set aside for rural Ontario and really pleased that the Premier has recognized its importance through the Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal. This is certainly going to be of tremendous assistance to our rural economy and to small-town Ontario. Many thanks to the Premier for recognizing the importance of rural and small-town Ontario. Indeed we are investing extensively in rural Ontario.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): We saw something this afternoon from the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly that was a very interesting ruling, to say the least.

I like to be fair to people on the other side when I think they've done something right, and I was pleased that the new Minister of Correctional Services and government House leader stated in the House that it was wrong for operatives within the government to use the Web pages of individual ministries—that is, the civil service—for partisan reasons, and that it was going to stop. I want to compliment him, and it's not a backhand compliment. It's hard to do when you're in this House, to admit that something that government has done is wrong and that you're going to cease and desist. The government House leader did so, and I want to commend him for what he said in the House today.

I thought the Speaker's ruling was correct. As I think government members know and as individual elected members know, there are always smart people, very clever people—more clever than the people who are elected to this House, of course—who advise ministers about these things, and, "Wouldn't it be smart if we attacked the Leader of the Opposition on the Web site of

a ministry?" If any one of us wants to use the Web site of our political party to do so, as Norm Sterling said and as the Speaker said, that's quite appropriate. That's where we are to be partisan, and people expect that. So when I read something from the Liberal Web site or the NDP or the Conservative Web site, I know it is from the viewpoint of our political parties, and it should be looked at as that.

There is a good tradition in Ontario, and I learned this when I became a minister when we took over in 1985, because I was suspicious that everybody in the civil service must be a bunch of Conservatives. I found out soon that we had a very professional civil service, that in fact they were there to serve the people of Ontario. There may have been some people who particularly favoured the previous government, but there were other people who had different points of view. I think one of the strengths of our system is always when we can detach the partisan political end of it from the civil service end of it. The government House leader today indicated his view that that should be the case, and I was pleased to see that. I want to commend him and those he spoke for, and criticize those who were responsible for doing it in the first place. I suspect it isn't elected members of the assembly who do that; it's overzealous advisers who tend to do that.

I wanted to say that to begin with, because I think it's important in this House to give credit when credit is due.

I want to also mention about the allocation of funding for various things, because we're dealing with a number of ministries.

I want to say how dismayed I was—I mentioned this in a statement in the House the other day—that the company called Norstar Entertainment was contemplating a film based on the exploits—infamous exploits, I might add—of Paul Bernardo and his assistant, or his wife in this particular case, Karla Homolka, that they had to make a movie out of it. As I look around, I don't know anybody in this House who wants to see that happen. It's not a partisan issue. I don't look across the floor at the government and say, "They're not prepared to do anything about it." The government is going to do everything it can to prevent that from happening, within its power, and we recognize the government has certain limited powers. But I'm sure the people of this province don't want to see that happen.

It's one thing when a production company produces something that's fictitious; in other words, someone in their mind has created a story, the story is converted to a film, and it is totally fictitious, or it may be based vaguely on something that's happened out there. But to look at people who have caused so much personal pain to the family and friends of the victims, and certainly I know from a personal case—I know Donna and Doug French very well. They've been through an awful lot. They go to the high school graduations and give out the Kristen French Memorial Award. Every time they come up to that stage it has to be very, very trying on their part.

There's always a hush in the audience and a special round of applause, knowing what they've gone through.

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But it hasn't simply been the trial of Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka that has been a problem for them. There are other trials that have come out of this—the lawyers involved and now someone who wrote a book about it. There's always that fear that they're going to drag out the infamous tapes and have those shown in court again. They're not unrealistic enough not to know that if there's evidence that has to be presented in an appeal some time, the tapes may have to be used. What they ask is that the world doesn't have to hear or see the tapes, that only the jury and court officers would have to be involved in those tapes. In the best of all worlds, they'd love to see those tapes gotten rid of completely; we all would.

Again, I'm not here to be critical in that particular instance because I happen to believe that whether a person is a New Democrat, a Liberal or a Conservative, they don't want to see that film made. I wrote to the president of the company today to ask that he not proceed with this, that it wasn't necessary to produce this particular movie, that it would cause additional anguish and pain.

We understand the news media must cover events of this kind. Much of what we see in the news media is negative because it is the unusual. That's what is news. It's not news when the usual thing happens. So we understand; we may not like it, but we understand when we see that coverage in the newspaper, on television, on radio and in magazines.

But it's not necessary to glorify and dignify Paul Bernardo with some kind of movie about him. I would hope the company would not proceed with that. I know the government, within its jurisdiction, will ensure that there is not funding for it or that there is not any encouragement in any way, directly or indirectly, of this film being made; in fact, that there is discouragement of that.

I want to deal with a couple of other issues that come within the purview of the concurrences this afternoon. One is the continuing issue of doctor shortages. I'm not the only one who suffers from this. People in any rural area or smaller town area or anywhere outside of the major metropolitan centres in this province know what it's like not to have doctors.

People call us as MPPs. I was looking though my notes coming from my constituency office today. Someone was annoyed at me because I didn't get them a doctor. I guess I'm overstating it. This person's doctor died a couple of years ago. "When have you ever raised this, Mr Bradley?" People in this House know we all try to raise these issues, and do raise them, but unless somebody gets the provincial Hansard of what goes on in here, we don't see that happening.

We have to find a way to get more doctors into the field. One is that we have to graduate more of them. I know the thinking a number of years ago was, "We've got too many doctors graduating and it's going to cost the

system too much." I think one of the things we didn't look at as a society—and I'll zero in on Ontario because that's what we represent—is the age of the present doctors. What we're finding out is that a lot of them are nearing retirement now. Just think, for instance, of the age of doctors in many communities outside of the greater Toronto area. Are the doctors older than you are? For a lot of people they are, and that means some day they're going to have to retire. We can't ask them to go on forever, although many do work beyond the so-called normal retirement age of 65.

You've heard me mention ophthalmologists. I'm told that one third of the ophthalmologists are over the age of 65, one third between 55 and 65, and one third under 55. As all of us get older we have some problems with our eyes. We need glasses and we need other treatments for our eyes. We're going to need those people.

It's going to be a matter of graduating more, but it's also getting them to the right area. That will partially be incentives to get them there. Often we don't like to have to offer those incentives, but we have to find ways to get people to those areas and do it soon.

General practitioners in the Niagara Peninsula have practices that are overflowing. When there's an announcement that somebody's retiring or moving or somebody's died or someone's ill in the medical profession, there's a crisis created in our area.

I do want to see this Legislature address that issue, and the government address that issue, and I will support any initiative by the government—if it involves the expenditure of additional funds to do so, I'll support the government in that, and defend the government if it is to do that.

The last issue I want to talk about, because I want to leave 10 minutes at least for my colleague from Pembroke to speak, is the one of the chief election officer. I understand we have to appoint a chief election officer to replace the retiring chief election officer. I simply want to caution the House that's a very important position. It has to be somebody who's acceptable to the three political parties represented in this House, and indeed to the population at large. You can't simply plunk somebody the government thinks is going to be favourable to the government in that position.

You have the right to appoint the other positions; I understand that. I understand the patronage system out there. This is an independent officer, and I hope we choose very carefully the person for that position, because I think we have to engage in some electoral reforms that are going to make the system much fairer than it is today, though heaven knows our system can't be as bad as it is in the United States, when the Supreme Court, on what I would call a partisan basis, has made a ruling which has made George Bush the President. If the people of the US chose George Bush as President and that's how they voted, that's fine with me; that's their choice. But I observed today something I hope doesn't happen in our system, and that is a very strong politicization of a Supreme Court on a political issue. I hope we don't see that happen in this country.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

I'd like to take a few moments tonight to talk about the electricity issue. I honestly believe there is nothing that we will have done in the past seven to eight years that will be more important for the intermediate-term future of the province of Ontario than the so-called deregulation of the electricity marketplace. This, I want to say, is subject upon which we have not spent nearly enough time as a Legislature. It is very complicated and confusing, and my sense is that about a half-dozen people in government—the current Deputy Minister of Energy, the Deputy Minister of Finance and a couple of other people—are seized of this, but very few of the politicians in the cabinet and most members of the Legislature have not a very good sense of what is happening in one of the areas of greatest sensitivity for both the economic and the social well-being of the province.

Last week the Ontario auditor, Erik Peters, tabled before the House a report which indicated that there is not just risk to the Ontario electrical ratepayer but, as the Provincial Auditor indicated, he has looked at the plan of the government to defease or to retire the over \$20 billion worth of stranded debt and he tells us that there are additional risks to the Ontario government and to the Ontario taxpayer.

I'm not here to grind some kind of a partisan axe; this is not easy stuff. But make no mistake about it: it is stuff that is going to touch every resident, whether he or she be a residential consumer, a farmer or an owner-operator of a business, large or small. There are few issues that touch more centrally to the economic and social well-being of a province like Ontario than the availability and the price of electricity. It's no secret to anyone who knows anything about the economic history of Ontario in the last 100 years that the fact that we've had relatively cheap, very available and quite reliable electricity has been a cornerstone of our economic prosperity.

The world has changed. I will say again: the government of Mike Harris embarked on some change five years ago that I honestly believed had to be undertaken. The cornerstone of the policy announced five years ago was, "There shall be competition in the generation of electricity." That was a right direction. My concern today is, we have retreated from that. I say to the House that if you are looking at the electricity sector, 70% of the cost of your electricity bill is generation; 15% is transmission and 15% is distribution, but 70% of your bill is the commodity cost. We are doing very little in the early days of this new policy to create an environment where we will get new generators in the marketplace. In fact, the government is pursuing a policy where we are re-monopolizing a part of the sector, particularly in the distribution area.

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I say again to my colleagues, particularly in the government, when we have over \$20 billion worth of stranded debt that is going to have to be paid by the Ontario electricity ratepayer and the Ontario taxpayer, why on earth are we allowing our retail company, Hydro

One, to go out and spend hundreds of millions of dollars that they have to borrow to buy utilities large and small? That was no part of the plan three and four years ago. If you go back and look at the Macdonald panel, struck by the Harris government to advise on this matter, no one in that group—and that group included Macdonald, a former federal Minister of Finance, and McKeough, an able Minister of Finance provincially—none of those people recommended to the Ontario government and to the Ontario Legislature that we needed to have a bigger Ontario Hydro Retail. That's what we're getting.

There are academics like Professor Joe Kushner over at Brock University who've looked at some of these purchases being made by Hydro One. Professor Kushner is telling us, as are others, that Hydro One, still a company that the Ontario government largely controls, is paying, according to these experts, 30% and 40% above market to buy. The auditor told us last week that the first year of the operations of the holding company, that the debt of Ontario Electricity Financial Corp—it's an acceptance corporation for all of the stranded and related debt of the successor companies—after the first year, has gone up by hundreds of millions of dollars.

The Minister of Finance railed at me last week and said I didn't know what I was talking about. Well, I have checked not just with financial people but I've talked to people like Tom Adams over at Energy Probe. He's looked at the numbers and he agrees that the numbers are worrisome. They're not nearly as positive as the Minister of Finance has indicated and would like us to believe.

I note that today we have these gargantuan companies, the Ontario Power Generation company, which is the successor company to the generating side of the old Hydro, and Hydro One, the retail company—multi-billion dollar corporations—operating in the dark. We have no idea what they're doing. We can find out after the fact, but they're out there spending your money, your ratepayers' money, and spending money for which the Ontario government will be ultimately responsible in a way that provides precious little oversight.

The energy board, our provincial regulator, in a judgment just two months ago, said that in a hearing held this summer they have concluded that once the market opens up and the rate freeze is lifted—and presumably that will happen in the next two weeks to six months—the energy board tells us that if you're an Ontario Hydro One customer your electricity bill is going up to go up minimally 13%. Make no mistake about it, hydro rates are going to be going up for all classes of customers in this province.

And as we have seen in places like Alberta and the Pacific northwest and California, there are a number of issues in this so-called decontrol and deregulation that are very complicated. Does this Legislature understand that deregulation essentially means that the price of not just natural gas but electricity will be established not in Toronto, not in Winnipeg, not in Montreal, not in Edmonton, but in New York and Dallas and Seattle and Los Angeles? Do you also understand that the vast majority, 90%, of the new electricity plants being

planned or built in the United States today, for example, plan to use natural gas as a feedstock? You wonder why natural gas is going up? I can tell you one of the reasons: virtually all of the new power plants contemplate natural gas as a feedstock. There is a very real correlation between the two. So if natural gas prices have doubled and tripled and quadrupled, as they have in the last 18 months, make no mistake about it, that alone is going to put significant upward pressure on your electricity bill as well as your natural gas bill.

This Legislature is a bit like a referee in one of those professional wrestling matches, distracted by some inanity, some obscure diversion in the upper reaches of the stadium, while some very nasty things appear to be going on down in the ring. I just want to say we had better, both as government and as a Legislature, start turning our minds to this electricity issue. We've got all kinds of markers out today in the marketplace, and the poor consumer is basically at sea. The government was told two years ago that there is an obligation to provide good and clear, consumer-friendly information to the consumer and do it before the market opens. That's not happening. I say to anyone watching tonight, be very careful before you sign any new deal, particularly for electricity. Be very careful. Read the fine print. Sad to say, your electricity bill is going up, not down as Mike Harris promised very glibly a few years ago.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Environment. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education and Training. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my view, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my view, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Tourism. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my view, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Labour. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my view, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for Management Board Secretariat. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my view, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my view, the ayes have it.

This will be a stacked vote and will occur at the end.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Attorney General. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my view, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my view, the ayes have it.

This will be a stacked vote.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Solicitor General. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my view, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Correctional Services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

This will be a stacked vote as well.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, supplementaries only. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my view, the ayes have it.

This will also be a stacked vote.

We will now have the votes. Call in the members; this will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker: Would members take their seats.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John	Young, David
Guzzo, Garry J.		

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Levac, David
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 21.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John	Young, David
Guzzo, Garry J.		

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Levac, David
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley

Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, supplementaries only.

All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 49; the nays are 21.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Correctional Services.

Same vote? I heard a no.

All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John	Young, David
Guzzo, Garry J.		

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Spina, Joseph
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Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John	Young, David
Guzzo, Garry J.		

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Levac, David
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
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Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 49; the nays are 21.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning, Thursday, December 14, at 10 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1811.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 49; the nays are 21.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Première session, 37^e législature

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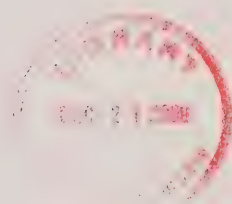
Jeudi 14 décembre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 14 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 14 décembre 2000

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Orders of the day.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): Ballot item number 55, order number M64, second reading of Bill 64, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fund-raising activities of legitimate charities. Mr Crozier.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We were led to believe that the order was the other way around. Is that something that needs to be corrected or do we move on with that?

The Deputy Speaker: My understanding is that this is the way it is printed.

Mr Levac: I would seek unanimous consent for a five-minute recess.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Levac has requested unanimous consent for a five-minute recess. Agreed?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would be prepared to go ahead.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed? Agreed. Then we won't need the five-minute recess.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (HISTORIC VEHICLES), 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (VÉHICULES ANCIENS)

Mr O'Toole moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to number plates for historic vehicles / *Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les plaques d'immatriculation pour les véhicules anciens.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Durham has 10 minutes to make his presentation.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is a wintry day, and so I understand some of the delays with the members being present in the chamber today. But with your indulgence, I want to thank a number of people to begin

with for supporting Bill 99, which really allows the use of year-of-manufacture plates on historic vehicles.

I first want to thank a number of individuals. Gord Hazlett is the author of this book, *Old Auto Tales*, and has been very instrumental in bringing forward this concept, this idea, so I thank Gord. There are a number of other people I would also like to thank, including the editors and members of *Quill and Quail*, "Canada's leading Model A Voice" in the province of Ontario. It's an interesting publication for auto enthusiasts. I'd like to thank Philip Wilson; their historian, Ross McDowell; their president, Ross Walter; Ian Lavery; as well as Philip Wilson and Josie and Jim Campbell; from *Huronian Wire Wheels* chapter, Jim Campbell and the secretary, Josie Campbell; and a number of people.

I am very surprised and quite impressed with the attention to this particular bill taken by the historic vehicle enthusiasts, and also from the *Old Autos* newspaper, which is produced periodically and circulated to members. I want to thank them for running my petition, which has been read innumerable times in the House and supported by many members on all sides of the House. That's just some of the body of support that I've received among many e-mails and other correspondence that I've had. I'm going to read a few.

This is from the past president of the Austin Healey Club of Southern Ontario, Ian Allison:

"I recently read an article in the *Toronto Star* indicating that you have introduced a private member's bill that would allow owners of 30-year-old classic cars to have YOM plates registered for their cars.

"We of the Austin Healey Club of Southern Ontario would like to thank you for your effort and to give you our club's support from our 142 members."

So there's clear support there. These people range in age, they range in location, and there's nothing partisan at all about this.

Another very enthusiastic and very active collector and restorer is a fellow by the name of Lennis Trotter. He's an architect. He writes:

"Dear Mr O'Toole:

"Re: Year of manufacture plates for classic cars

"As you may recall, I wrote you about a year ago regarding the use of refurbished plates on antique or classic vehicles.

"I am pleased that you have seen fit to introduce a private member's bill in support of this concept and hope Bill 99 will be passed in the Legislative Assembly.

"Many Ontarians share an interest in the restoration and perfecting of vintage vehicles. To these enthusiasts, the option of registering their vehicles with year of manufacture plates would be a popular choice. I understand Bill 99 would also produce revenue for the province ... without additional costs to the government.

"I know Ontario's antique car, truck and motorcycle enthusiasts will welcome your private member's bill and I wish you every success in ensuring the bill receives final reading."

From Roy Fice, good support here:

"As you know, owners of antique and classic vehicles take great pride in restoring their cars and trucks in complete detail. Allowing the plates from the year of manufacture would be popular with many enthusiasts because plates from the year the car was built would make the restoration complete."

That's the general tone from Dave Lumsden as well, from Ancaster, Ontario, who e-mailed me. He goes on in some detail on how the regulations will unfold in the future.

For those listening today and those participating, I just generally want to thank them. But I think more importantly I want to thank John Parker, a member in the previous government, the 36th Parliament, who initially did a lot of work on this particular private member's bill. For that I'd like to thank him.

I'd also like to thank David Turnbull, the Minister of Transportation, and Diane Betts, his able executive assistant, as all staff quite honestly do a good amount of the work in this place and we get a good amount of the credit.

For members on all sides, I'm sure they have constituents who support this concept, and I expect to hear from them on that.

Last but not least, certainly I want to thank my legislative assistant, Greg MacNeil, who has done an extensive amount of work and consulted with many of the people who have sent us e-mails or petitions. He has certainly tried to make sure that everyone's been embraced as supportive on this. As members know, I introduced the bill on June 20 of this year and since that time I've received overwhelming support. Those who forgot about the bill over the summer holidays would have been reminded of its presence on the order paper by the hundreds of petitions that my colleagues and I have tabled in the Legislature over the past few months; ad nauseam might be the way of describing that petition, but nonetheless, it is politics.

1010

I know I speak to members on both sides of the House when I thank all those for the time they have taken to present, read and support the petitions. I would also like to thank many of the people I've already thanked. These include Ian Lavery, Ross Walter, Ross McDowell, Gord Hazlett, Roy Price, Lennis Trotter as well as Jim and Josie Campbell, who I've thanked before.

The list is really too long to mention, but many of the people responsible for this initiative are in the gallery this

morning and I'd like to thank as many as possible. Some have been delayed by the storm. They must be stuck. Their antique vehicles aren't able to withstand these weather conditions. They are certainly here in sentiment and some may be watching at home. I see Ian and a couple of the other members in the gallery, so thank you very much for joining us.

"The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to allow number plates to be used on historic vehicles if they are Ontario number plates that were issued during the year of manufacture of the vehicle.... Historic vehicles are defined" by current legislation "to be motor vehicles that are at least 30 years old and are substantially unchanged or unmodified from the original manufacturer's product."

In other words, the owner of a 1931 Model A Ford would be permitted by this legislation to register and use a 1931 Ontario licence plate on that vehicle. The legislation also stipulates that the licence plate would have to be in a condition satisfactory to the Ministry of Transportation and its number could not duplicate the number of any licence plate currently in use.

This would effectively create a fourth option for antique owners in Ontario. In addition to the regular licence plate, the vanity plate and the historic vehicle plate now issued by the ministry, antique vehicle owners would be able to use plates issued when the vehicles themselves were made. This really is the point of Bill 99.

Over the past several years, I've consulted with members of countless car clubs and at chapters not only in towns and cities across Ontario, but across Canada. Some of these clubs include the Specialty Vehicle Association of Ontario, the Antique and Classic Car Club of Canada, the Model A Owners of Canada, the Dodge Lovers Club, the Lincoln and Continental Owners Club, the Northern Rambler Car Club and many others too numerous to mention.

When bringing this together, as simple as it may sound to some, there are jurisdictions in Canada, like Alberta, that already do it. We felt it was time Ontario extended the same opportunity to our constituents.

The message I've heard from these clubs is very clear: the year of manufacture plate allows antique owners to ensure that the restoration of their vehicle is complete in every detail. I've quoted a number of letters, and those letters are pretty much unanimous in support. Of course there will always be a wish or a desire to improve, to make it less expensive and more accessible. We have done the first step, which is to get this as a legitimate use in the restoration of vintage vehicles.

Remind ourselves that Ontario is the industrial heartland of this country. Certainly in my riding of Durham, where the General Motors headquarters is located and where I worked for 30 years, I can tell you there are many people who as a hobby and as a way of life have a great affinity and affection for automobiles. There is quite a nostalgia trip attached to all this for the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Even the 1960s and 1970s vehicles will now qualify. Many of them are in everyday use in good weather.

It's something that will be celebrated across the province. As a final reminder, Ontario this year I believe will produce more automobiles than the state of Michigan. I think it's important to realize the importance of the auto sector and its history, not just from Sam McLaughlin but many others who have built this great province we all enjoy.

It's these enthusiasts who keep that up and remind us of the history, the heritage and the traditions of the automobile in our society today. With that, I know there are other speakers who want to comment on this and I'll relinquish my time. I'll leave it with one second.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Speaker, I'll be sharing my time today with the member for St Catharines.

I just want to stand and commend the member for Durham and let him know that I will be supporting this legislation. I want to talk about licence plates from an historical standpoint. First off, I think we use the word "automobile" all the time, but often we may not know the origin of that word. The word "automobile" comes from the Greek word "autos," meaning self, and the French word "mobile," meaning moving. Hence the word "automobile."

The member spoke of the importance of the auto industry to this province. The first Canadian manufacturing plant opened in Windsor in 1904 when a group of businessmen started the Ford Motor Co of Canada just across the border. This branch plant was the beginning of the automobile industry in Canada. As it's important to that member's riding, it is to mine too. I have the Ford St Thomas assembly plant, which is the only plant in North America manufacturing the Crown Victoria and the Grand Marquis. We have a large Magna plant, which is building all the truck frames for General Motors through a process called hydroforming.

But I think it's important too that we talk a little bit about the history in Ontario. The first car owner that we know of in Ontario was a gentleman by the name of John Moodie, who in 1898 imported a car into Canada. In my own riding there's a reference to an automobile appearing on the streets of St Thomas in 1899, so for over 100 years automobiles have been driven in the streets within my own riding.

Ontario was the leader when it came to identifying vehicles in the form of licence plates. In the registration of vehicles, Ontario was the first province in Canada. The idea was that the money was needed to begin the development of a suitable highway network and to set up a system to administer and enforce vehicle laws.

In this Legislature, in June 1903, an act to regulate the speed and operations of motor vehicles on highways was passed. I want to thank Jean McQuattie from the legislative library for her effort in helping me prepare for this morning. Part of this legislation read as follows: "Every resident of this province who is the owner of a motor vehicle, and every non-resident owner whose motor vehicle shall be driven in this province, shall pay to the Provincial Secretary a registration fee of two dollars for

each motor vehicle. The Provincial Secretary shall issue for each motor vehicle so registered a permit properly numbered stating that such motor vehicle is registered."

That's an interesting thing. Maybe we should start that as a way to generate some more revenue with all these vehicles travelling through our province, that we should have to register them on their entry into Ontario. It could be new revenue and much needed one for our roads in this province.

The legislation also went on to say, "The owner of each and every motor vehicle ... shall carry and expose on said motor vehicle the permit issued as aforesaid by the Provincial Secretary. He shall also have attached to or exposed upon the back of every motor vehicle, in a conspicuous place, the number of said permit...." There's another thing we could do to save some money in this province. I don't necessarily think we need to continue to have two plates on our vehicles. Most provinces and the majority of states are only using one vehicle plate. You can see that they had the foresight in 1903 that we only needed plate on a vehicle.

It's interesting too when you read the newspaper. Hansard doesn't exist for 1903, so we have to rely on newspaper accounts. On June 4, 1903, the debate was not so much about the registration of vehicles—by the way, the initial licence plate, when it was first issued in Ontario, cost \$2. The great debate was the speed limit in the province. At that time, the speed limit in Ontario was seven miles an hour. The debate that took place in this Legislature, and it was quite heated, was whether or not to move the speed limit up to 10 miles an hour. That ultimately did happen.

Again reading from a 1903 article on automobiles: "A short discussion of automobile legislation must not be overlooked. The automobile frightens many horses, especially in rural districts, and reckless speeding has sometimes proved dangerous to pedestrians."

Talking about the legislation, "The framers of such legislation, however, usually seek to put the speed limit of an auto at a ridiculously low figure. Naturally, the majority of the legislators have never been in an automobile and have merely seen them pass at a speed which sometimes looks dangerous."

1020

We'll talk a little bit about the evolution of the licence plate in Ontario. The first plate was designed by a member of the Hamilton Auto Club. It was in the shape of a shield and made of leather, with metal house numbers attached. These early leather plates are extremely rare today. In total, we know that there were 713 of these early plates issued.

The evolution of the plate began in 1905, when rubber plates were issued. In 1906 Ontario went to two plates and a pair of rubber plates was issued, and 1911 is the only time in the history of the province that we had a porcelain licence plate. It was found, though, that the porcelain chipped very easily and for that reason porcelain was no longer used. In 1912 we went to flat steel, in 1921 it

was embossed steel, and we continue with the embossed steel today.

Up to 1954 the length of a licence plate varied based on the number of characters, but from 1955 onward the standard 6 by 12 size was adopted. Something else to think about is that you used to have to go in every year and pick up your new licence plate. It was in 1983 that staggered registration took place.

We've seen a lot of slogans and graphics over the years on plates: "1867 Confederation," "Keep it Beautiful," and in 1982 "Yours to Discover" was adopted on licence plates in Ontario.

They tried reflectorization on plates in 1939 but it wasn't until 1994 that we went to reflective plates in this province.

The Prime Minister of Canada has a special plate. His plate is CAN 001. The Ontario Premier's plate is ONT 001.

I could go on and on. I just want to thank a few people: my barber, Ray Fowler—as I would get my hair cut Ray would remind me of the importance of this legislation; Dave Granger of Bradford, who has an auto restoration business, provided me with some information; Ian Lavery from Toronto, who is here; and I mentioned Jean McQuattie.

I think it's important that we support this legislation. If anyone is in the antique business, you should start buying pairs of plates because I think they're going to be quite collectible.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I'm delighted to participate in the debate today. I have to say that it's an amazing place we work in. Where else could you come to work and in such a short time learn so much about the history of licence plates in Ontario, the materials they were made of and the sizes of them? I enjoyed the member's speech and I commend him for working with leg research and others to pull that together. It was very interesting.

I come at this not from a historical point of view but from I guess a very pragmatic point of view and a little bit of personal experience. I wholeheartedly support the member for Durham's bill. I've received correspondence from individuals in my riding who are members of vintage car clubs and I have had the opportunity and the joy on various community occasions and ceremonies—the Beaches Easter parades and other sorts of things—to participate along with the car clubs and to be able to ride in some of these amazing vehicles. To see the kind of care and love that goes into the restoration is phenomenal.

I've had an opportunity to see that at close hand as well. My significant other is a bit of car enthusiast himself and he has a 1964 Corvette. It's a nice car. It's a sort of powder blue convertible—lovely. When he purchased that you couldn't, from my perspective, call it a car. It was on a trailer and in pieces, and lovingly, painstakingly over many years, bit by bit that car has been restored. Of course someone who is a real enthusiast will know and understand that to restore a car is not simply to put it

together and make it look like it did. It is to go, part by part, and find the factory part that was manufactured at that point in time for that car, for that model, so that the whole thing is factory vintage. The true enthusiast's dream and hope is that at the end that's what they'll have. So can you imagine, having gone to all that trouble, that you are fortunate enough to locate a vintage licence plate from that year and are not able to put that finishing touch on the car as well? I think the bill is appropriate. It's pragmatic, and it makes sense.

I want to pay a bit of tribute to the member for the work he has done on this and the work by the former member Mr Parker. While it sounds so simple and common sense, I know from having spent some time on the government benches and in the cabinet the difficulty in working something like this through the bureaucratic streams of government. I don't say that in a pejorative way. I understand very much the role of the rules and regulations we have within the Ministry of Transportation. But it would seem that this project took an awful lot of work through the backrooms to ensure a proposal could come forward that the ministry could accept, that they could support and that they could find a way to have complement the existing licensing system. As the member has said, probably more could be done, but this is a good first step.

I applaud the work of all the folks in the vintage car community who have spent the time to send their comments and their hopes and desires for this legislation to members of the Legislature, and the work they have done to support Mr O'Toole and Mr Parker in pursuing this issue within the Ministry of Transportation. I think the kind of commitment that takes is evidence of the kind of people who are involved in these communities; the commitment they have to the restoration of vehicles, to the maintenance of these pristine, historical preservations—I can't think of the word I'm looking for at this point in time—a demonstration of our past. I think they're an amazing group of people.

I've had a chance to go to some of the various car shows, even some of the not necessarily vintage shows but things like the Barrie Automotive Flea Market, where you see a great range of vehicles that come forward and are shown. The pride that people display and the fellowship that develops in these clubs as they travel all around the world to bring their cars to shows is quite amazing.

I'm delighted to support the bill. I'm not going to speak at length. I think it's very straightforward, it's supportable and I think we should move to the vote as soon as possible. Mr O'Toole has known my complete support for this bill since his introduction of it, and I'm delighted to be here today to demonstrate that support.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I also rise to support Bill 99, with respect to number plates for historic vehicles, also known as the O'Toole-Parker bill. I've also had a number of constituents contact me, including well-known experts in the field like Tom Stackhouse in Norfolk and Fred Thompson in Haldi-

mand. These guys really are legends in their spare time. Mark Hone of Townsend, in my riding, wrote me a letter that I wish to quote: "As the owner of an antique car—a 1966 Mustang—I have a personal interest in the movement of Bill 99 through the Legislative Assembly. During my car's restoration, I have kept all parts as original as possible, and feel that as a final touch, a number plate specific to the year would add a nice completed touch."

With respect to old plates, I bought these maybe 25 years ago. They're a matching set. I would ask permission to hold this up as a prop. I've been waiting 25 years for the O'Toole-Parker bill so I can attach them to my car, which I bought close to 40 years ago. They're not as shiny as the new ones, and I know there's a visibility and safety issue. I feel this can be accommodated with my vehicle. I have a 1941 Dodge. It's a five-window coupe, flathead six. Some of you may remember those back in your drive-in days. We have so many memories.

1030

Ms Lankin: I wasn't born then.

Mr Barrett: I wasn't born then either. But from the safety and the visibility issue, I know that I plan on installing truck lights under the back bumper, down on the frame. They won't really impact the appearance of the vehicle, but they are there when I'm driving at night and need to signal a turn or hit the brakes.

With these plates, it's not legal for me to drive on Ontario's highways. I was chatting with Sheldon Priddle of the Summer Nights Car Club. He explained to me that at so many of these shows—we had a show in Waterford this fall; well over 1,000 antique and classic cars showed up at this event—the drivers come in, take the new Ontario plates off and install the old ones for the day. Then they have to do that again so they can drive home. I think we can get around some of that, in a sense, red tape issue.

As we've heard, enthusiasts who decide to restore antique cars go through a great deal of work. They spend large sums of money, and this money is spent in the local area. We know this down in my riding. I received a letter from Milt Chesterman of the Tillsonburg area, who belongs to the Historical Society Of Antique Cars. He explained that antique car owners do a lot for the local economy and generate a lot of work for a lot of people.

Old cars are also big business when it comes to fundraising. These car shows, rallies and other events often-times are used to raise money for local children's charities. For example, Summer Nights, a car club in the Tillsonburg area, has raised a great deal of money for Camp Trillium at Rainbow Lake, which provides recreational opportunities year-round for children suffering from childhood cancer and their families.

Anyone who has an older vehicle understands what a conversation piece it is and the smiles it brings to the faces of people. Older generations admire the car and immediately begin to reminisce about younger years. I also find, when I drive my 1941 Dodge around, that it's a real hit with kids on bicycles, for example. They always want to know the year it was made—again, another

reason for the antique plates. They would tell people right off the bat the answer to their first question: what year was that old car or truck made?

Preserving this part of our history does not come at a small price, however. Many car buffs travel North America looking for just the right car or the right price and end up bringing parts back in a bushel basket, putting these vehicles together really from scratch.

In my opinion, it really is a bit of an eyesore when driving down the road to see the brand new, flashy white licence plates on a vintage vehicle. I feel it ruins the authenticity, and I believe it's high time we allowed year-of-manufacture licence plates in Ontario. Car enthusiasts really have never asked our government for anything. They really don't ask for much, other than, "Just don't lean on my car."

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to start by following up on the member from Haldimand's reference to people not leaning on my car. In fact, that is the case. You'll notice that when there are parades, the people who have antique cars will have people put their feet up on them or lean on them or poke around them. Of course, they've spent literally thousands of dollars to restore these vehicles. It's not just the money they've spent but the time that has been spent on them and the pride they have in these vehicles, and I think they are to be commended.

I've had some letters come in on this matter from various constituents asking me to support this bill, and I think it's a very good bill to support. I talked to Jane and Bill Bickle on the weekend. They are enthusiasts. They went right across the country this year in a 1931 Model A roadster. In the Christmas card they sent out to their friends, they describe part of the tour across the country. They had to fly out there and essentially drive it from Victoria to St John's, and of course they had to take it across the harbour from the island to the mainland on the ferry. But it was an interesting trip for them. They said that Brian Tobin greeted them as they were coming into St John's—I guess he was still Premier of Newfoundland at that time—and led them into St John's. So it was quite a trip for them, and I know that for the Bickles and others like them this is a major hobby.

It's a good bill for the member to bring forward. Often we get involved in here in partisan clashes, and I always thought the private members' hour should be devoted to legislation of this kind, which arises from people bringing to our attention certain matters they would like to see dealt with.

I'm going to read the letter from Bill Bickle. I have a similar letter from Eugene Lampman in St Catharines; they would be the same:

"Please add my name to the number of antique vehicle enthusiasts who would like Ontario to offer year-of-manufacture licence plates.

"Many of our American friends and residents of Alberta are able to complete their restorations of historic vehicles by adding appropriately restored vintage plates that are registered and validated as normal plates.

"This addition of a bit of Ontario ... history to our restored vehicles would be a crowning touch to the enthusiast's accomplishment.

"This is a good idea whose time has come and I am hoping that you will promote and advance Bill 99 for the good of all automotive enthusiasts who keep our rich automotive history alive."

Similar letters have come in from others, and I'm glad to see that. I know, as all members of this House do, that on days where there are parades or special days in our community, those who own these vehicles are kind enough to have them on display or perhaps even utilized in a parade. They add so much. They are a real treat for the kids out there who perhaps have never seen a vehicle of this kind, have seen only modern vehicles, and of course they are a real treat for the kids' grandfathers and great-grandfathers, who get to have their memories restored as the vehicles go by or as they are on display. They are always extremely popular.

This is quite obviously a major investment. There are other people who have a hobby of collecting licence plates. A friend of mine by the name of Bob Cornelius in St Catharines collects licence plates from all over and from years gone by. The member for Durham has pointed out, appropriately, that we're going to see nice licence plates. There were some people who had raised the issue of having a nice car and these tattered old, broken-down licence plates that nobody could read. Well, anyone who understands the restoration of vehicles understands that those individuals who have them don't want an unattractive licence plate, so we certainly know that they will keep them in tip-top condition.

The bill does that, and that's very good for us. Not many people have a chance to take that 45-day trip that the Bickles took from one coast to the other in their 1931 Model A Roadster, but they probably envy them and love to hear the story of it and see some of the photographs and movies and hear tapes taken as a result.

I want to say as well that we have a history in our own community of St Catharines with the automotive industry. McKinnon Industries became General Motors. We have TRW-Thompson Products involved in the making of parts, and Dana Corp, Hayes-Dana as we called it, involved again, and many other industries which of course assist and are part of the automotive industry.

I want to indicate my strong support for this bill. I know my colleagues will be supporting it very strongly, and I believe this is an initiative that will be accepted unanimously and will be a real asset for the people of Ontario.

Mr. R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I am very pleased to speak to this bill, Bill 99, from my colleague from Durham. It's interesting, I think, that maybe he asked an antique to speak about an antique bill. The first car I ever bought was a 1932 Ford Roadster, and I want to assure you it was not brand new; it was bought in the mid-1950s. But it was an interesting little vehicle with a rumble seat. I often think that they only had rumble seats for a certain length of time, the fact being that you couldn't do much in the rumble seat, nor could you carry

much in the rumble seat, so they had to make the cars a little bigger and have a regular back seat in them.

1040

So I know a little bit about some of the older vehicles. I learned to drive on a 1951 Ford; I drove one for a while. My dad had a 1938 Chev, which he drove for about 20 years, which he won at the local exhibition. At the moment, I have a 1952 24-volt army Jeep, which someday I'm going to restore.

I think this type of bill is something that car enthusiasts and antique car buffs have wanted for many years. When you look at what these individuals do, going all over the country making sure they get authentic parts and authentic equipment for those vehicles, why are the licence plates any exception?

In the great riding of Peterborough, they have a rally and a show every Wednesday night during the summer. It attracts cars from all over the area. If you look at these vehicles, I suggest to you that they're probably better maintained than most vehicles or some of the much newer vehicles on the road. Certainly a number of people from the various clubs in Peterborough, guys like Charlie Dunford and Bill Haslett and Norm Blodgett, have urged me to make sure I support this bill and encourage all in the House to do so, because if there's one thing that is on those vehicles that is not authentic, I think it's a bit of a downer, not only for the car buff but for the vehicle itself. We designate buildings in this province as heritage, and they must have everything in them authentic to the time. If they are repaired, they have to be repaired in the way they were back when they were built. There is no reason in the world not to allow this to happen.

Again in the great riding of Peterborough, General Motors is probably the biggest employer. Certainly the automobile business, whether it be old or new, is very important to my riding. So I thoroughly support this bill and I would encourage everybody else to do so, because I think it is long overdue. When you look at the number of plates that many antique car enthusiasts have sitting in boxes that they can't use, or indeed those who are still out trying to find the licence plates for their particular cars, I think it is important and they should be allowed to do it, and I support this bill very much.

Mr. Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm happy to support the bill as well. I think I've always owned an old car. I've owned two Model A's. When I grew up in London, Ontario, I had a Model A. I remember that when I moved to Toronto, good friends of mine, Lyle and Simmone Atkin, allowed me to store my old Model A in their barn. They had, I think, four boys. Years later, I was looking over in the corner here one day at the Premier's OPP security guard, Larry Atkin, and Larry is the son of Lyle and Simmone Atkin. So it's kind of a small world, that a long while ago I left London, Ontario, stored my Model A in their barn, and years later who is the OPP security chief for the Premier but the son of the people whose barn I stored my Model A in?

Today I have a 1967 Beaumont, a really neat old car. My wife often wonders what it's doing under that cover.

She thinks it's rusting; I think it's just aging nicely. I don't know whether or not I'd have to declare a conflict; all of us here seem to own an old car. But I'm pleased to support the member's bill. I look forward to putting this on my car and surprising my wife as I fire the Beaumont up in the spring and drive it out with my brand new plate on, looking for all the world like I know what I'm doing.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): It's a real pleasure for me to be able to stand and support this bill. I've had a number of phone calls and letters from constituents asking that I support this.

I would like to point out that what we're talking about here is that we're going to allow number plates to be used on historic vehicles if they are Ontario number plates that were issued during the year of manufacture of the vehicle, are in a condition satisfactory to the ministry and show no numbers that duplicate the number of any other existing permit, and it only applies to cars that are 30 years old or older.

Many of us can think back to the days when we used to watch parades go by and see the old putt-putts. We'd say, "What is that car?" Of course as we got older we bought some of them. I didn't. I can't afford it, not like Gerry Phillips or Gary Stewart here. In fact, Gerry Phillips probably bought it in the year of issue.

Aside from that, if we hearken back, we look to the old vehicles—the Stutz Bearcats, the Model A and Model T Fords, the Packards, the Studebakers—and many of these had historical significance, particularly if you look at the Studebaker. Many of you will probably remember that the Studebaker was an old Concord. It was an old carriage that was pulled by a horse before the motor vehicle came into being.

The young pages here will be able to look back 10, 15 or 20 years from now and say, "I remember the Oldsmobile." As we all know, the Oldsmobile is not going to be produced after next year.

I can think back to the cars I drove in the 1960s, which I would love to have today. I think they were a whole lot better than the cars that are manufactured today. I had a 1964 Plymouth that lent a whole new meaning to speed. I had a 1966 Dodge that lent a whole new meaning to sports luxury. When you look at the loving care that antique car restorers put into these vehicles today—they treat them like children—why shouldn't they be allowed to have a licence plate from the year of manufacture? This has so much meaning, so much significance.

I really want to compliment the member, John O'Toole, for bringing this bill forward.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I too would like to support Bill 99, brought forward by John O'Toole and, of course, John Parker, who is sitting here on the sidelines today watching this.

As you look at antique cars, it is evident here this morning that there's such a love of these vehicles from right across our province. I was very interested to hear Mr Peters's comments on some of the history. I didn't realize some of the things you brought forward. You'll know my brother-in-law, Ron Shaw, who travels down through your part of the province all the time. Back in

September, I think, he was down to a Ford reunion held in Detroit—these people truck these vehicles all across our province.

Earlier, Mr Wettlaufer mentioned about the Oldsmobile no longer being manufactured after next year. I have a friend in my riding, a fellow by the name of Jerry Walters. He bought a 1904 REO. It was actually the original vehicle. It was a truck version. It had a whisky company—I think it was Seagram's or something similar to Seagram's, one of those types of companies—on the side of it. It was used as a delivery van. He's had it completely restored. The REO was named after Ransom E. Olds. This is a 1904 vehicle. He puts it in all the local parades up our way.

I also want to commend all the people who take such an interest in their communities. We have an Elvis rock-and-roll weekend every year in Orillia. About 9,000 or 10,000 people come out to this dance.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Collingwood's got a better one.

Mr Dunlop: I think the Orillia one is pretty good. Over 200 antique cars line the streets. It's such a show to go and see the care and hard work people put into this so they can display their cars along the streets. Of course, in the evening we have this huge party. There are Elvis impersonators playing 1950s rock-and-roll music and all that sort of thing.

1050

It's interesting to see what people do and the love people have for these vehicles. I think it's so important that we do everything we can as a government and as legislators in this House to make sure that we keep this trend going for many years into the future so we can show the young people the type of vehicles that were originally here at the turn of the 19th century and what we'll see as we go into the 21st, 22nd and 23rd centuries.

The Deputy Speaker: Response, the member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: In the limited time left, I would like to certainly recognize Wayne Plunkett, an antique plate collector in the gallery today who has taken an interest. Thank you for coming out.

I would just like to sum up by saying that in Durham region the seventh annual autofest, Autofest 2000, was held at the GM headquarters, and they had visitors from all over North America and in fact the world. Most recently General Motors commissioned the restoration of one of the 1908 McLaughlin Buicks by a fellow by the name of Harry Sherry of Sherry Classic Autos, from Warsaw, Ontario, who did a spectacular job in the restoration. It's really quite a work of art.

This summer a very good friend of mine, Arnold Kerry, rebuilt by himself a 1950 Buick and in fact drove it across Canada. Jim Grieve, who's the owner-operator of the IGA store in Port Perry, annually drives me in each of the parades in one of his three or four classic cars. It's something very near and dear to their lives and certainly my life, and it's one small thing we can do to pay some respect to the people who keep the history alive.

Gord Hazlett has done an article in *Old Autos*. In fact, he was instrumental in organizing a review here at Queen's Park and I want to thank him for that. It's a very good article capturing the history.

Toby Barrett, one of the members who spoke today, has brought these licence plates. No, I did not make this while I was doing time. These are just examples that will bring history and the vintage plates and the vintage vehicles all into the modern world and times. In fact, in five years we might have electric cars and start a whole new genre of auto enthusiasts.

I thank all of the members for participating and I look forward to their support on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for Durham, particularly for his co-operation and assistance this morning.

SAFE STREETS AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

Mr Crozier moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fundraising activities of legitimate charities / *Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la sécurité dans les rues et le Code de la route pour reconnaître les activités de financement des organismes de bienfaisance légitimes.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Essex has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I too want to thank Mr O'Toole and the members of the Legislature for the unanimous consent this morning on what was some misinformation on my part, and the fact that Mr O'Toole and his colleagues were prepared to proceed with the debate. Otherwise I might not be here speaking. I appreciate that.

I also want to thank this morning two gentlemen from the cystic fibrosis association who joined me in a media conference earlier: Mark Fitzsimmons, who is captain in the Toronto fire department and chair of the national board of directors of the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada; as well as Yves Savoie, national executive director and executive director, Ontario, for the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada. They will be joining us this morning for this debate.

The Safe Streets Act was first passed about a year ago, and I acknowledge and understand the government's position at that time in that it wanted to control the activities particularly of what are called squeegee kids on the streets, as well as aggressive panhandling. My bill, I say to the members of the House when I ask for support of it, is to correct an inconsistency that's developed all across this province. It's having a significant effect on the fundraising activities of charities, and I would just

name a few. I mentioned earlier, just a minute ago, that the firefighters across Ontario collect \$600,000 for muscular dystrophy every Labour Day weekend with their roadway boot drives. Shinerama, a student-run street campaign for cystic fibrosis, raised \$380,000 in Ontario last year, in 1999. The Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada expects to lose about \$750,000 annually because of the way the Safe Streets Act stands at the present time. Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children raised \$5,000 for their Herbie fund last year. Under the Safe Streets Act as it stands, this fundraiser is illegal. There are Goodfellows all across the province, Kinsmen and Kinette Clubs, the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving, the Windsor Regional Hospital burn unit and so on who have been detrimentally affected by this act.

We're merely trying to correct it. Bill 64 is very simple. It's a one-page bill that wants to do two things. It is to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999, and to amend section 177 of the Highway Traffic Act. What it merely says is that the activities carried on by these charities, as they apply to their fundraising activities, can be held if they meet two simple conditions: that they are conducted by a charitable organization recognized by Revenue Canada, and that they are permitted by a bylaw of the municipality.

I've had support from a number of municipalities across the province, and I'll only give a couple of examples.

Fire co-ordinator Max Hussey, of the regional municipality of Waterloo, has written on behalf of the Waterloo Regional Mutual Aid Association:

"I would like to express our support for private member's Bill 64....

"The firefighters raise a substantial amount of money each year for muscular dystrophy by holding road tolls.

"We believe this is a very worthwhile cause and this yearly event should be exempt from the act."

The town of Tecumseh in my riding has written that they passed a resolution on their meeting Tuesday, November 28, "That the council of the town of Tecumseh supports the request from Bruce Crozier, MPP, respecting his private member's Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act."

Just to outline the problem that this has caused, I'll read part of a letter from the town of Leamington, my home town. It is written by Brian R. Sweet, the director of corporate services.

"After the passage of the Safe Streets Act by the present government, the Leamington council had no choice but to withdraw its approval and support of these two charitable events" held in the town, that being the Kinette Club's daisy drive and the Leamington firefighter's boot drive. "Even though the municipality has never received a single complaint in the many years that these organizations were conducting these fundraising events, the municipal council had to stop the activity."

I add as a footnote that the municipality has been informed by their insurance that if the firefighters in Leamington, for example, were to conduct such an event

and not be exempted from the Safe Streets Act, liability insurance would not be valid for the town.

I also want to quote from a couple of news articles, one, the Eganville Leader, where the Killaloe OPP were recently asked for their approval for a toll booth. They were informed by Staff Sergeant Jim Graham that as far as he understood the new Safe Streets Act, fundraisers like the toll boot are no longer allowable by law. I quote, "My understanding of the legislation is that nothing like that toll boot is allowed."

1100

Also from the Eganville Leader in May of this year I quote, "So with this Safe Streets Act it is now illegal for such organizations as the Eganville fire department to hold its annual toll boot fundraiser, an event that has been held for the last 10 years to raise money. It's strange: have you noticed in recent years how the province has squeezed us out of more and more methods of raising money, yet at the same time has given us all kinds of new lottery opportunities to support?"

My point here is that I don't really think that the province, the government, had any intention of squeezing charities out of fundraising events. I think, with the passage of the Safe Streets Act and its original intent, that we then suddenly found ourselves in the position where it had a much broader scope. When police departments looked at this act, they found themselves in an untenable position.

Attorney General Jim Flaherty, being the top legal officer in our province, said, rightly so, when asked about this last November, "They will have to obey the law." I agree with that. Laws are there for a purpose. Laws are not there to be broken by intention and laws are not there so that police departments will be told in some instances to look aside. Even if they use the discretion they have, all it takes is one complaint and then that's the end of it.

Jim Parent, president of the Windsor Goodfellows, said, "If that becomes law," and it did, "It would kill us." Staff Sergeant Dave Rossell, a spokesperson for the Windsor Police Service, said, "We can't pick and choose which laws we want to enforce and those we don't. We may be put in the position where we would have to enforce."

That is the position we're in today. What I'm asking my colleagues in the Legislature to consider today is that by two simple amendments to the Safe Streets Act—it will still have the same impact that was intended when it was first passed and supported by this Legislature—by exempting registered charities that have permission of the municipality by bylaw under the Safe Streets Act, these charities will be able to once again continue to raise money for those who need our help and whom we can help the most by supporting the likes of Goodfellows, the firefighters and other charitable organizations in the province. So I ask the members for their consideration and support.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I'm pleased to rise and speak to the bill this morning, Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act.

I probably shouldn't be this way but, lately, whenever I see a private member's bill from the opposite side, I look at myself and I say, "Why are they doing this?" Maybe I'm being overly cynical but—

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: I know, Rosie.

The Safe Streets Act that we passed last year fulfilled the Blueprint promise to stop aggressive solicitation and squeegee kids. It was to make our streets safer.

The Highway Traffic Act always prohibited any solicitation while on a roadway. Now the member from Essex, Mr Crozier, brings forward this bill as an amendment to the Safe Streets Act. I wonder if he would have brought forward an amendment to the old Highway Traffic Act. Nothing has changed here insofar as the charities themselves are concerned. Would he have brought forward that amendment under the old Highway Traffic Act? It's a very simple question to myself, and of course I can't answer it.

The minister, Mr Flaherty, has written to the municipalities. In the Toronto Star on April 9, 2000, it was reported:

"Charities across Ontario were concerned the new legislation—designed to combat aggressive squeegee kids and panhandlers—was being used by local municipalities to also ban long-standing fundraising campaigns that take place near roadways.

"Medians and shoulders and sidewalks are not part of the roadway," Flaherty said.

"Flaherty met Thursday with representatives of the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada to discuss the problem faced by the charities.

"The letter," said George Henderson, Muscular Dystrophy's Ontario spokesperson, "will help us in situations where municipalities have arbitrarily held up Bill 8 and said you can't do what you've done in the past."

Other charities, including the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, have shared the concerns of the Muscular Dystrophy Association, but I'd like to assure them that nothing has changed from the old Highway Traffic Act. This is not targeted at them. It was targeted at aggressive panhandling and the squeegee kids.

There have been some supportive quotations insofar as this act is concerned and how it may or may not affect the charities.

Ed McNorton, Windsor police staff sergeant, in a November 24, 2000, Windsor Star article, said, "As far as aggressively going out there and kicking people off the street for selling their magazines, no, we're not going to do that. The intent of the law was aggressive soliciting and people who bother people at bank machines or disrupt traffic."

Deb Mineau, senior constable, Essex OPP, in a November 24, 2000, Windsor Star article, said, "The legislation was not intended for organizations such as the Goodfellows. They're not aggressively approaching people."

Chris Townsend, London Chapter President, Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, in a March 30, 2000, letter to

the editor, said, "It is the intention of our foundation and Shinerama committees across Ontario's colleges and universities to continue this successful campaign. In addition to raising awareness and funds for CF research, it is our primary goal that all students conduct themselves in a safe manner."

I think these three quotes point out exactly what we're talking about: aggressive solicitation versus a safe approach. As long as they're not on a public roadway, there's no problem. There wasn't a problem under the Highway Traffic Act; there is no problem now.

I have to say that I cannot support the legislation because I wonder why it was brought forward.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I had prepared notes to go down a certain road, assuming the government would see that there was a small problem with the bill they passed. I was simply going to say, "Thank God they see there is a small problem and they're going to support Mr Crozier and are going to be reasonable about this and say, 'We understand there's a misconception about the law out there and an inconsistency that's happening across the province, so let's make it mandatory that we have that understanding across the province.'" That was what I was going to do. Now I have to stand and ask why the government is going to be against this bill.

First, I want to start in a polite way to say to my friend, to a gentleman who has received support from charities across the province, that he's done his homework. Since January 30, 2000, I believe, the bill became an act. Mr Crozier from Essex has done a yeoman's job of trying to pull this together to ensure that the people of Ontario, particularly those in need, are cared for by charities across the province. I want to say to him, thank you very much for your dedication and for bringing this to our attention. Thank you for doing something that we believe in at private members' time, and any time in this Legislature that we put forth ideas and concepts that we believe will improve the province and improve the legislation that's put forward. In the spirit of understanding, the people who do their homework will understand that this legislation is nothing more than simply trying to correct a small flaw that was found in legislation. Instead, now we're starting to hear the debate of, "Oh, there must be an ulterior motive to this. They don't understand the law. They don't understand what's going on. They're not the people who know how to legislate."

Unfortunately, since we're starting to hear that, I have to go down another road. I'm going to go down that road by simply saying to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo—I think it's Kitchener-Waterloo—

1110

Mr Wettlaufer: Kitchener Centre.

Mr Levac: —Kitchener Centre, sorry—you proved the point. You used three quotes from people who said that it's OK and they're going to proceed anyway, and we've given you quotes from municipalities that have passed bylaws to make sure that you don't go on the roads, that you don't do those activities. It proves inconsistency. I'm going to use your own words against you to

say then that you should support the bill, to make sure there is a consistent understanding across the province.

I want to make sure we also understand that we're talking about what the firefighters are. As the Solicitor General critic, I've become very passionate about understanding how firefighters put their lives on the line every day, day in and day out. The understanding that I have about this group is that not only are they professional and not only do they do their job exceptionally well, but these people are law-abiding citizens. They want to obey the law. They are examples. They set themselves a high standard of professionalism, a high standard of community service. Every police officer I've spoken to so far in my role as critic for the Solicitor General, and the firefighters I've spoken to, including chiefs, deputy chiefs, captains and all of the front-line firefighters, have said to me they support Bill 64 wholeheartedly, so much so that they included Bill 64 in their lobby day to show that they are community-minded and law-abiding citizens.

They have a deep fear, and their understanding is that this is going to stop the boot drives. In essence, it has. Why? Because since January 31, 2000, when the bill was enacted and put into place, over \$200,000 has been lost to the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Why? Because they want to be law-abiding citizens, first and foremost; because they abide by the law of the land. It was pointed out very simply that the law of the land has a flaw. That simple, small flaw is that what was attempted in the Safe Streets Act to take care of one problem actually created another.

Mr Crozier's request is not to repeal the law, not to stop the government from its agenda, this particular issue, which was the first piece of legislation they put forward. What he wants to do is simply amend that piece so that the second part of the law, which reached across the province and not maybe two or three centres around the province—he's simply asking for the government to understand, "Please, go along with us. Understand that there are municipalities out there that have a different interpretation of what the members opposite are saying including the Attorney General." Just because he says it's so, which I've learned through my year here, it's not always so. Just because he has an idea or a concept or a thought, somebody advised him, it's not always the fact. It's not always the way the Attorney General says it is.

What we're finding out across the province is that it's eradicating the possibility of the Muscular Dystrophy Association raising \$750,000 a year, because they're law-abiding citizens in this group. The firefighters are law-abiding citizens. In the gallery with us today is George Henderson from the Muscular Dystrophy Association and Captain Mark Fitzsimmons from the Toronto Fire Department, who is also the chair of the national board of directors of the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada. The two gentlemen's presence here today is to try to send a signal to you, to make it very clear to you that they have a deep concern about this.

Instead of just simply pushing it aside by saying, "Our opinion is that it's no problem," do us the favour, support

the bill, get it done, on the books, so there is a consistent understanding across the province of how fundraising can and can't be done.

I did a little local research. I want to compliment the firefighters, both professional and volunteer, in my riding, in the small village of Glen Morris, in the town of St George, in Paris, in Brantford. Each of these areas in my riding has used, at one time or another, boot drives. That's where the fire department sets up a little boot drive on the road. They stop right in the middle. Why? Because that's where the traffic is, and the people expect it and the people want it. The firefighters do an exceptionally professional job and their main key is safety. So they set this up in a very smart, appropriate way such that absolutely no one—and here's a piece of history for us—has been injured or hurt during any of these boot drives across Ontario—not one single person.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): They support this bill in St Catharines.

Mr Levac: I can imagine that they support this bill across the province.

I want the members opposite to take a step back and simply understand that there is an inconsistency in your own words. If I listen to you carefully, your own words will consistently show that there is inconsistency across the province, and because of that this bill should be supported. It must be supported so that the activities of law-abiding citizens, particularly the firefighters of our province, which raise millions and millions of dollars, can continue.

They are saying to you, first on the lobby day held just last month, that Bill 64, which has nothing to do with their benefit—they didn't come to us saying, "I want, I want, I want." They came to us with Bill 64 as one of their top three priorities: "For our community, we want you to support Bill 64." I don't think that's very difficult to understand, and I implore the members on the other side, I beg the members on the other side: understand that this isn't about a whack at you, that this isn't about who wins and who loses. This is about correcting a problem in the legislation that has been pointed out to you by members on this side of the House. So I wholeheartedly support this bill, I thank the member from Essex for putting it forward and I implore the government to support this bill.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I wish to speak to the bill introduced by the member for Essex. I congratulate him on sticking up for charities and the wonderful work they do in this province. I will be speaking against the bill, and I speak against the bill because if you refer back to what Bill 64 is trying to do, it's trying to amend Bill 8, also known as the Safe Streets Act. The intent of the Safe Streets Act was to keep our streets clean—to keep our streets safe, rather, the roadway safe. Yes, in my riding—

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Clean of all those pesky people?

Mr Tilson: Give me a break, you know. The member from Beaches-Woodbine says, "Keep it clean of those pesky people." Those are her words.

The issue in my riding with respect to keeping the streets safe is that we too have service clubs that have these toll roads. They're working with the police services boards, they're working with the municipalities and they have their toll roads off the roadway, at an entrance to the major mall of the community, where it is safe. I would hope that the service clubs and the charities and the other organizations around this province would continue to do that.

I must say that I am critical of the bill because there are two ways in which he's asking for this act to be amended. One is that you must be a registered charity and the other is that you must have approval from municipalities.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): It's a terrible thing, isn't it?

Mr Tilson: Well, the point of the issue is that I thought the province of Ontario administered the safety of the highways and the streets of this province. It's called the Highway Traffic Act. Why are you downloading the issue of safety to the municipalities? I don't understand the requirement of the bill, demanding that the local municipalities pass a bylaw to approve what these charities are going to do. The safety of the streets of this province is on the provincial government, not on the municipalities. Read the act.

1120

As far as registered charities, I don't know why you're discriminating against everyone else. There may be other organizations that are not registered charities under the Income Tax Act of Canada. There may be other charities. There may be other organizations. There may be other non-profit organizations. Your bill doesn't refer to those. Why are you discriminating against those people?

The bill that is being proposed is flawed. The member has mentioned a group from down his way that was quoted in the Windsor Star. Goodfellows, I believe, is the organization. There was a story that ran in the Windsor Star—Windsor is near the riding of Essex—which has the following headline: "Goodfellows not Targets of By-law, Police say." When the Goodfellows take their annual fundraising drive in two weeks, volunteers won't be targeted by police under the province's panhandling legislation unless their actions are the subject of specific complaints. The quote from the Windsor Star is, "As far as aggressively going out there and kicking people off the street for selling their magazines, no, we're not going to do that," said Windsor police Staff Sergeant Ed McNorton.

"The intent of the law was aggressive soliciting and people who bother people at bank machines or disrupt traffic," according to Essex OPP senior Constable Deb Mineau.

Interjections.

Mr Tilson: The members who are heckling over there, if they were to read Bill 8 and look at what the intent of the bill was, it says specifically sections 2 and 3. Read those sections. They don't apply to the people you're talking about. They clearly do not apply.

Mr Levac: The intent.

Mr Tilson: Read the section. He keeps blathering over there. I didn't interrupt him when he was shouting at me.

To imply that the Safe Streets Act deters fundraising by such voluntary organizations is certainly to misconstrue the intent of the act. Safety on our government's side is of utmost concern: safety of those who are approached and, importantly, safety of those who wish to participate in fundraising campaigns.

Voluntary organizations, charitable organizations, registered or not, can still raise funds in the traditional manner. They are only limited by this government's concern for the safety of those concerned.

Mr Crozier in his bill is attempting to amend the current act by classifying those who should be allowed to campaign on the roadways and those who should not. In drafting the Safe Streets Act, the government made a careful and deliberate attempt not to introduce such discriminating qualifications.

I hope that members would read again Bill 8 and vote against this particular bill that Mr Crozier has introduced.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): The squeegee bill passed on April 1, and we had warned the government during very short committee hearings and during debate that we feared it was going to adversely impact charities. We were told by the government on numerous occasions that that was not the case, that we were to take their word for it and rely on their interpretation of the legislation.

One of the arguments that was made was that prosecutors would exercise their discretion in a way that they wouldn't crack down on charities because that wasn't the purpose of the act. Then something happened that I don't think even the government anticipated. Before the charities could go to the streets to engage in their charitable work, they first had to go to the municipality to get permission to do so.

It was at that point that legal counsel to the various municipalities all across Ontario said: "You know what? We can't grant that licence," or that permit, whatever it may be. "Why? Because we are going to be running afoul of the squeegee bill."

We argue here on both sides occasionally, "Here's what the law means." The parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General will say it means X and I will say it means Y, but the way we as legislators resolve things is either to amend legislation during the debate process or amend it afterwards if a provision has resulted in something this government was not anticipating.

One way this government has tried to deal with the problem is by—in an unusual move—the Attorney General of Ontario, in April this year, writing a letter of interpretation to all those charities and municipalities saying, "Your legal opinion is wrong. This bill should not impede charitable activities." I would say, with all due respect—the Attorney General's legal opinion is one that is brought before the courts—that while he's not always wrong, the Attorney General, like Attorneys General past, is not infallible. There are a number of occasions on which the Attorney General has told this House that the

law said this, and it did not. The efforts to try to strike down the firearms act is one example. Most recently, the Ontario Court of Appeal held that judges' secretaries could form a union because it doesn't violate judicial independence. The Attorney General had argued to the contrary, but the Ontario Court of Appeal had the last word on that.

Here is an opportunity for us to fix the legislation. Maybe the municipal council's opinion is wrong, but that's not for us to say. Charities, in fact, are not getting the permits and are not getting the necessary permission to move forward. So what's happening? We know that in London the squeegee bill nixed the University of Western Ontario's annual fall Shinerama, which last year raised \$380,000. Muscular dystrophy, we've already heard, expects to lose some \$750,000 annually in Ontario. We've heard the Ontario firefighters' boot drives to raise funds have been banned by the bill. Lastly, Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children raised \$5,000 last year for the Herbie Fund through a similar promotion. They were told they have to find other alternatives. Again, we can argue what the law means. The reality is that the law is being interpreted in a way that charities are not able to go out and raise that money, and we're talking about \$1 million a year.

The parliamentary assistant argued, "Look, Mr Crozier, your bill is flawed." I know my colleague would be more than happy to have this bill go to committee to have any fine-tuning that needs to happen. But I fear this is a bit of a false argument and that the government doesn't want in any way to concede or brook any change when it comes to a bill they've brought forward.

I would say this is how we fix bills, in private members' business. Here's an opportunity for the members to say, "You know what? Obviously this is hurting charities, particularly outside the city of Toronto. This one-size-fits-all solution for a Toronto safe-streets issue has had the adverse effect that charities are losing \$1 million a year."

If you want to amend Mr Crozier's bill, he's happy for that. But let's pass it, let's support it. Who could not support it? The legal arguments made have been rejected. Would the Attorney General send the question of the way the provision should be interpreted to the Superior Court and let a judge decide? He refused to do that. All he was willing to do was make a legal argument through a letter. I say the Attorney General should appear before a court to make that argument, so we can get a final judgment, or the Attorney General or the members here ought to agree to this bill, so we can fix the act. Obviously the government's intention when they passed this legislation could not have been to knock down \$1 million a year in revenue from charities.

I urge members to leave aside the partisan sniping on the issue of the squeegee bill. We can talk about the squeegee bill another day. This particular provision and this particular bill—

1130

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to say to the good citizens and decent taxpayers who are watching this program this morning at 11:30 that we're debating Bill 64, a bill introduced by the member for Essex which New Democrats will be supporting. But for the benefit of the good citizens and decent taxpayers who are watching, I want to tell you what Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act, was all about.

That legislation created new provincial offences, amended the Highway Traffic Act and made it illegal to do several things: solicit in an aggressive manner, such as panhandling or ticket scalping, as well as solicit persons in places where the right of way may be impeded, for example, bank machines, transit stops, public washrooms, pay telephones and transit vehicles.

It makes it illegal to dispose of used condoms—think about that for a moment, good citizens—needles, syringes and broken glass in outdoor public places. Just imagine the cops sitting on some street where they think this stuff might be going on, because it could be going on anywhere in Ontario, well-paid cops—presumably they are to protect all citizens from serious crimes—out on some corner, let's say Queen Street or Bloor Street. It makes it illegal to dispose of used condoms, so some cop is looking out for that kind of activity. It's pretty dumb, right?

Mr Levac: It's got to be used.

Mr Marchese: Of course it's got to be used, or presumably used. Why else would you dispose of it? It's got to be used, yes.

It makes it illegal to stop, attempt to stop or approach a vehicle for the purposes of offering, selling or providing commodity or a service to the driver or other people in the vehicle. Basically, that third point is about the Blueprint promise that gives the police the power to crack down on the most horrible of horrors: the squeegee kid. Talk about serious crime. Honest citizens, good citizens, honest taxpayers, good taxpayers, this is the government that introduced Bill 8, a bill designed to have cops keep an eye on the people who are using condoms and then disposing of them, making it illegal. I hope you find it funny, good citizens, because I find it tragically funny.

And the other piece of the law that makes it illegal to panhandle aggressively, making it impossible for firefighters and other charitable organizations to do their good deeds? And the third one, to dispose of the lowlife, the squeegee kids, the ones who frighten the wits out of so many of these provincial Conservative members as they're driving along Queen Street maybe or by the lake-shore as they get on to the highway. Imagine these poor MPPs driven out of their wits by those horrible of horrors attempting to clean the windshield.

Taxpayers of Ontario, stick with me for a while if you're watching this program. You've got to love this government, right? Have you ever seen a wackier government than this, that wastes my time and wastes your money to deal with this kind of stuff?

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): Where is Bob Rae now?

Mr Marchese: Good judge, I respect some of the work you do, so please. I don't want to say anything that might not be polite. Good judge, I tell you this stuff is an insanity. How can you support stuff like this? Come on. You've been on the bench and you know what serious crimes are all about. Good God, sexual assault is a serious crime. Get out there and do the work and deal with that. We've got serious stuff like domestic assault that's hurtful to families and to women and to children. Please, good judge, try to work with these guys. You've been on the bench and you know that's the serious crime you've got to deal with. Violent crime is bad stuff for society and the victims who are affected by it. What about hate crime?

Get out there, good judge, you and the others. Try to convince these people, because you know what this is all about. Convince these others that they know not of what they speak, and that they waste—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Or maybe they do know what they're doing. Because when some of these lawyers out there argue that this may be unconstitutional, this Conservative government loves that. Would that someone would take it to court. Would that some good judge out there might say this is illegal, unconstitutional, because either way this Conservative government wins the battle. Not only are they cleaning the streets from those horrible of horrors, but if someone should dare to take this government to court and they should lose this, they win. Because then they can say, "These courts are just so interventionist. My God, there's nothing we can do any more, as law-makers. These people, these judges, come and they create their own law. Here we are, trying to clean the streets of the riff-raff, of the rabble, of the lowest of low, and you've got judges here saying that what we're doing is unconstitutional." Then you have Mike Harris coming back saying, "We've got to work on it. We've got to make things a lot tougher and we've got to make sure we put people on the bench who agree with our laws, the kinds of bills that we pass in this place," this Bill 8, the Safe Streets Amendment Act, 1999, that goes after squeegee kids so poor seniors don't have a heart attack as they're trying to clean their windows, and so cops are wasting our money trying to pick some guy up because he threw a used condom somewhere on some street of Ontario.

Good citizens, are you following my discussion here? Because, as you remember, I don't talk to these MPPs; it's a personal discussion with you, because they don't listen.

Here's an amendment presented by Mr Crozier that is, I think, a reasonable request. And you already had two MPPs saying, "We like the charities, but we don't like this bill, this amendment." This amendment attempts to correct a problem, because the law is quite clear. That's why I read it out. It makes aggressive panhandling illegal in certain places, such as bank machines, transit stops, public washrooms, pay telephones and so on.

These charities, firefighters and others, can't do the work they used to do. The law is clear. The letters written

by the Solicitor General and the Attorney General are vague as to their intent. My understanding of what they have done is they have written to municipalities and to the police saying, "Work with the charities." It doesn't say, "If you do this you might be charged," because you will be, under the law. It says to the municipalities, "Work with them."

Some municipalities say, "Sorry. Yes, you say work with them, but the law is quite clear and it says we can't do it." So some municipalities are preventing these people from doing the work they want to do. That's why the attempts by Mr Crozier to put this amendment to make that clear, so municipalities cannot deny them those applications or those permits, and so the police quite clearly know they shouldn't be arresting them or stopping that activity.

It's quite clear; it's obvious, yet you have members—I don't know. They stand up and they make fanciful—not even fanciful. It's not very intelligent, I would say. This is just a modest amendment.

You recall my buddy here, Peter Kormos from Niagara Centre, was the first to raise this concern in this Legislature. He talked about the effect it would have on charities—it was very obvious from the law—and warned the government they ought not to do it because they would lose thousands and thousands of dollars as a result of this law that would disable them from doing this activity, and that many people who depend on them wouldn't have that support. He told them, "You shouldn't do it."

We opposed Bill 8 because it was a dumb, dumb piece of legislation, as a result of which my friend Peter Kormos introduced a bill that would repeal that act. It was called the An Act to repeal the Safe Streets Act, 1999, and in French, which I think is even more pertinent, it's called *les nouveaux Misérables*.

What does it mean? It's a bill that is poorly conceived not only because it leaves charities vulnerable but because it persecutes the poor. Basically the people it persecutes are the poor. That's why it's badly conceived and dumb. It makes of those who are already victimized, those squeegee kids, many of whom have difficult problems—it persecutes them and then says to the charities that attempt to help those very people who are persecuted that they can't. On both counts the law affects the persecuted and those trying to help them.

1140

The obligations of government are disappearing. Not only do you have a government which no longer feels obligated to help those who need the help, but you now have a government that relies on volunteers to raise money, and this bill prevents those volunteers from raising the money that would help the persecuted. Do you follow, good citizens and good taxpayers, how dumb this piece of legislation is? This government is relying more and more on volunteers and relying on the corporate sector, God bless them, to dish out millions of dollars, if they have it, to help those who need it. It is relying on charitable organizations to do more of what governments

used to do in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Now with this government it's disappearing. Governments are no longer governments. The Conservatives call themselves the non-government government. If governments don't have the obligation to help people, then who is left? If all we have are churches and charitable organizations, left to help, but in this particular instance and with this particular law they are prevented from doing so, then who is left?

What we need is to end this attempt by this particular government to continue to pretend they're doing something on law and order when they are in fact doing so very little. Remember the introduction of the Victims' Bill of Rights. Judge Day, who ruled on that bill, said that the Victims' Bill of Rights has no rights inherent within it. There are no rights in the bill. Why would this government call a bill which purports to give rights the Victims' Bill of Rights if there aren't any rights? Do you see the game they're playing with you, citizens? That's why I talk to you directly. It's a game of pretending that it's a law-and-order government, but it's just a shell game, and if you are a victim of that deceit, then I pity you, citizens, and I pity you, good taxpayers, for falling into that trap.

That's why you need to be more involved and more politicized and more engaged, because only by doing so can you help to shape governments and can you help to make them accountable. God knows, many citizens in this province have tried to make this government accountable, but it's not working as well as it should. We need more and more of you citizens to decide that it's time to get out of our comfortable lives and our comfortable chairs and get out and make an effort to be a citizen. When you become a citizen, you're concerned not only about how laws affect you but how they affect others, because if it affects others in a bad way, it indirectly affects you. We are all citizens by the mere fact that we are human beings and we depend on each other.

This government is turning this society into a Darwinian society where every man is out there for himself. It's a dog-eat-dog kind of society. That's what they're turning us into. Do you want to be reduced to that state of affairs? I don't think you do. I know citizens don't want to and I know that once taxpayers understand the implications of bad laws, they won't want to either.

We support this modest measure. I hope there are a few others of the Conservative caucus who will as well.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 64, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fund-raising activities of legitimate charities.

This government recognize the legitimate activities of charities and the Safe Streets Act did not change the status quo with respect to how charitable organizations conduct their business. It's not a situation of fixing the Safe Streets Act; it's a situation of there being a misunderstanding. The Attorney General has done his best to bring this situation to finalization. But the bottom line is

you cannot override the Highway Traffic Act and what's being proposed in this piece of legislation doesn't do anything to address that situation—far from it.

I want to deal with the Safe Streets Act and its substance. The Safe Streets Act does not prevent someone from soliciting money from people in vehicles if the person soliciting is positioned on a sidewalk, shoulder, boulevard, median or other place that is not a roadway. That has been the law; nothing has changed. What is being requested here is for certain organizations to be recognized. Those organizations out there are already recognized by local police forces and by municipalities.

The Safe Streets Act is not aimed at solicitation that is courteous, and it does not prevent someone from soliciting money from people in vehicles if the person soliciting is positioned on a sidewalk, shoulder, boulevard, median or other place that is not a roadway. Under the Highway Traffic Act, it has always been an offence for someone, while on a roadway, to stop a vehicle to offer or to provide any commodity or service to anyone in a vehicle. That is the law. That will not change by the amendment being put forth by the member opposite. If it's trying to do that, I didn't see it on the face of this bill. I've read the bill and I think what it's trying to do is define what a charitable organization that would be allowed to do certain things would be. The member opposite knows that.

If the Highway Traffic Act is set up to ensure the safety of activities on the roadways, for the member opposite to indicate that that's wrong and that the Safe Streets Act shouldn't be doing something like that has nothing to do with the Safe Streets Act. First of all, we have to look at the safety of the public in terms of who's using the roads. The intention was that they were to be used by automobiles. They weren't intended to be used for any other purpose. That's why we have safety on the roads. That's why you have a Highway Traffic Act. To say that the government needs to fix something—there's nothing to fix. The bottom line is it's something that has to be worked out at a local level in terms of the volunteer activities, which are appreciated by all members in this House. There is no doubt about that.

This is not a situation where what we're dealing with here is something the member's bill will change. It's not going to change in terms of where those activities can legally be held. So it's not a situation that needs to be addressed by that piece of legislation.

Mr Crozier: I'd like to thank those members who spoke to the bill, particularly my colleagues from Brant and St Paul's and the member for Trinity-Spadina. I acknowledge the fact that some government members have spoken to it, but I certainly don't agree with their comments. This act proposed today does amend the Highway Traffic Act. The member for Kitchener Centre asked would I have brought forward an amendment to whatever he meant by "the old act." It wasn't evident as being a problem, but your safe streets bill has made it a problem, and that's why the amendment is coming forward. So that answers your question.

I know your legislation wasn't intended to affect charities. That's why we're bringing the amendment forward.

The fact that you're not going to vote for my bill, I can accept that. It would have been nice, though, if there would have been one government member who would stand up and acknowledge that there's a problem and acknowledge that the government was prepared to fix it. But not one of you stood up. "There's nothing wrong with our bill. Everything's OK." Well, let me one more time quote to you from a letter from the Town of Leamington: "After the passage of the Safe Streets Act by the present government, the Leamington council had no choice but to withdraw its approval and support" of two charitable events that have gone on for years. For your guys to stand up there and deny that there is a problem with your Safe Streets Act when it comes to charities, then you're blind to the whole issue. All these charities—

Mr Wettlaufer: What's the date of that?

Mr Crozier: What's the date of this letter? December 13, 2000. All you need to do is acknowledge to charities in Ontario that there's a problem with the bill. Clear it up. If you want to do it with a government bill, fine.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for debate on this matter is now complete. We will take the vote at 12 o'clock noon. There being no further debate, pursuant to standing order 96(e), the proceedings are suspended until noon.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1200.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (HISTORIC VEHICLES), 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (VÉHICULES ANCIENS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We'll first deal with ballot item number 56. Mr O'Toole has moved second reading of Bill 99. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill will be referred to the committee of the whole House.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I seek unanimous consent for Bill 99 to be ordered for third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: You're asking that it be referred for third reading? Agreed. So ordered.

SAFE STREETS AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Crozier has moved second reading of Bill 64. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Dombrowsky, Leona	McGuinty, Dalton
Arnott, Ted	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	McMeekin, Ted
Bradley, James J.	Hastings, John	Molinari, Tina R.
Bryant, Michael	Kennedy, Gerard	Parsons, Ernie
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Peters, Steve
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Phillips, Gerry
Colle, Mike	Linkin, Frances	Ramsay, David
Cordiano, Joseph	Levac, David	Ruprecht, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Stewart, R. Gary

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and remain standing until your name is called.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Sterling, Norman W.
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Stockwell, Chris
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 30; the nays are 30.

The Deputy Speaker: The ayes being 30, the nays being 30, I cast my vote in favour. The motion is carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill is referred to committee of the whole.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Mr Speaker, I would like permission of the House that it be referred to general government.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Crozier has requested that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government. Agreed?

All those in favour of Mr Crozier's referral will stand and remain standing until they are counted.

All those opposed will please stand.

A majority is in favour. This bill will be referred to the standing committee on general government.

There being no further business before the House, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1212 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MEDICAL LEGISLATION

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): On December 12, 2000, the Chair of the standing committee on general government reported to this House my Bill 2, An Act to

amend the Medicine Act, 1991, without amendment. The report was received and adopted.

The adoption of this report by this House is a significant step in providing Ontario's doctors and patients with freedom of choice in health care. It is noteworthy that of over a dozen presentations to the committee, none opposed the bill. All made strong arguments as to the benefits and necessity of this legislation.

One of the most eloquent and relevant statements submitted to the committee was from Peter Rothbart, MD, chairman on chronic pain of the Ontario Medical Association: "To my mind the core of this bill is the very notion that fundamentally makes it a human rights bill first and a medical bill second. This core notion is that the needs of a patient are central to medical practice, that patient outcomes matter most, that alleviating suffering is what medicine is all about, that the standard of medical science and the guiding light of medical practice must always address human suffering first and last. I urge you to pass Bill 2 in the name of medicine."

We are approaching the end of a long road in achieving the goal of responsible flexibility in how licensed medical professionals treat their patients and enabling patients to have input into the modalities recommended by these medical practitioners. I urge this House to give swift third and final reading to Bill 2 to achieve these ends.

VETERANS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Earlier this week I was moved by the member's statement by my colleague from Kitchener Centre, Mr Wettlaufer. As the father of one who served in the military, I know the kind of commitment and duty that is needed by those serving overseas, whether it is in time of war or of peacekeeping. I also think it is important for us to take a moment during this specific season of peace and love to thank those who serve our country and protect our democracy.

World War II and Korean War veteran Bob Douglas, who now lives in Port Perry in my riding of Durham, is one of those people who deserve our thanks. From 1950 to 1953, he and 26,000 fellow Canadians fought overseas in the war between North and South Korea. It is my understanding that Mr Douglas served in the armed forces for 22 years before retiring in 1968.

Since moving to Port Perry with his wife, June, in 1987, Mr Douglas became involved in unit 11 of the Korea Veterans Association in Oshawa. He held a variety of positions within the local organization, eventually getting more involved, and for 10 years was the KVA's national membership chairman. One of the causes that he and other Korea vets worked tirelessly for was official recognition from our federal government for their service in Korea. They succeeded, and after much discussion, with the government a volunteer medal was issued to the veterans of the Korean War.

As this marks the 50th anniversary, I would urge all members to thank those who served in this and other wars—especially, in my riding, Mr Douglas.

CHARITIES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Earlier today in private members' business, my Bill 64, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fund-raising activities of legitimate charities, passed with the support of my leader, Dalton McGuinty, my colleagues, members of the third party, and four members of the government. I want to thank them for that support and I want to thank all the charities that distributed petitions and supported that this bill be moved to second reading and to committee.

I want to assure the members present, and those who didn't support it, that the only reason it was brought forward was that there is some inconsistency in the province in the way municipalities give approval to charities to do fundraising activities.

It's my hope that this bill will move forward, with discussion and, even though it's a short bill, with amendments if necessary, so that there won't be any doubt that we, as a Legislature, support charities in the province of Ontario, for a variety of reasons for supporting the charity that is endorsed, so that there be no doubt we're all behind them, so that the law won't interfere with them, and so that we will be able to assist the charities in this province.

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF NIAGARA

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This government's disdain for democracy exposes itself frequently, and more frequently than ever. The District School Board of Niagara had a problem. There was a vacancy and no Welland representative on that board because the acclaimed candidate regrettably died before the election itself, too late for any other candidates to file nomination papers. The board very much wanted the permission and the assistance of the Ministry of Education in holding a by-election so that the representative for Welland on that Niagara district board would be a democratically elected one, as it should be.

The board considered the matter once again on December 5. The next day, December 6, they commenced their phone calls to the minister's office, seeking an audience with the minister, Ms Ecker, or some of her senior staff to get some consultation and assistance in addressing this serious problem of democracy on the board in Niagara. Those phone calls were futile. Notwithstanding persistent phone calls from the district board of education in Niagara, they couldn't get past the scheduling assistant, Ms Fran Hauseman.

An answer was needed from the minister before December 12. It's too late, Minister. You screwed up. You blew it. You've imposed a situation on the District School Board of Niagara that compels them, rather than going the by-election route, to merely appoint a member representing the city of Welland. You, Minister, are responsible with your dereliction of duty, with your disdain for democracy, with your lack of concern about public education, for the problems that are being created

in Niagara with respect to democratic representation of the people of Welland on that board.

SIMCOE NORTH WINTER ACTIVITIES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'd like to take this opportunity to invite all Ontarians to enjoy a winter vacation in beautiful Simcoe North. Located between the shores of Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe, we in Simcoe North are blessed once again with snowfalls that have left the region a true winter wonderland.

The Horseshoe Valley and Mount St Louis-Moonstone ski resorts offer some of the province's best downhill, alpine and snowboarding. If you prefer to cross-country ski through miles of beautiful forestry, come visit Hardwood Hills or some of the scenic trails in the Lafontaine area.

Snowmobile clubs throughout our region have been busy all summer building better trails and bridges to make snowmobiling safer and more convenient to those who wish to snowmobile locally and to those who wish to be connected to the provincial trail system.

If you prefer a winter indoor sport, come participate in a curling bonspiel in Orillia, Coldwater, Midland or Penetanguishene. All have excellent facilities and welcome you. If you are a hockey enthusiast, either as a spectator or a player, the ice hockey rinks are always hosting tournaments and games for people of all ages. Other activities may include ice fishing, public skating and figure skating.

For accommodation and food, there is a wonderful selection of bed and breakfasts either in quaint urban settings or in rustic country settings. There are hotels, motels, resorts and inns scattered across Simcoe North.

Our region is within one and a half hours of the GTA and two four-lane highways, 11 and 400, wind their way Simcoe North.

Call any of our chamber of commerce offices or a tourism office for more information. I welcome you to enjoy a Canadian winter destination in beautiful Simcoe North.

FEDERAL AID WITH HEATING COSTS

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I rise today to address the issue of rapidly rising heating costs and to commend the federal government for taking action, not just talking about the problem.

At the onset of what is shaping out to be a frigid, snowy winter with fuel costs literally skyrocketing, the federal government is actually doing something concrete about it. Yesterday, federal Finance Minister Paul Martin confirmed Ottawa's commitment to provide timely heating expense relief for eligible families and individuals in a time of great need. Beginning January 31, cheques will be in the mail to low- and modest-income Canadians. Married and common-law couples, as well as single-parent families, will get \$250. Individuals will receive \$125.

1340

I want an unqualified assurance today in this Legislature from the Ministry of Community and Social Services that it will honour this commitment from Ottawa to all eligible Canadians. Why? Because we've all seen how this government operates; for example, clawing back, dollar for dollar, national child tax benefits from social assistance and disability benefits, treating it like it was nothing more than found money for the province, taking money from the most vulnerable in our society, the poor and those with disabilities. This simply cannot and will not be tolerated.

Do not even think about this federal relief as a potential provincial money grab. This is federal money intended to help people in need. This year, I would prefer not to have to call the Minister of Community and Social Services a Scrooge, so please keep your hands off this money. It is intended for all Canadians, not for this province's already bulging coffers.

DON MESSER TRIBUTE IN NEWMARKET

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today to pay tribute to a Canadian legend. For 10 years, the most popular show on Canadian television was the Don Messer Jubilee, even more popular than Hockey Night—*Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Sorry to interrupt. We'll start over if we could. I'm sorry. Some of the members were still carrying on. It's not fair to the member.

Mrs Munro: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I rise today to pay tribute to a Canadian legend. For 10 years, the most popular show on Canadian television was the Don Messer Jubilee, even more popular than Hockey Night in Canada. Sorry, hockey fans. The show began on radio in the 1930s and continued until 1971. The Jubilee gang included Marg Osborne and Charlie Chamberlain. Now, with a little help from two fiddling champions, it is being revived as a travelling stage show.

Memories of a Don Messer Jubilee, starring two-time Canadian fiddle champ Scott Woods and Ontario champion Mark Sullivan, performed on December 8 at the Newmarket Theatre. Woods and Sullivan were joined by Messer alumni Sandy Hoyt, the Hamilton-area broadcaster who was the host of the show from 1969 to 1971, and singers Tom Leadbeater and Marie Gogo. The program included Messer's evergreen jigs and reels, seasonal songs, and a fitting rendition of the TV show's Butchta style dancing. Champion step dancer Laura Jarvis was featured in the Newmarket show.

I know that all of us will certainly appreciate the opportunity to see this revised edition.

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I rise today to talk to all the members of this assembly about

one of the duties we have remaining in the time left of this Legislature, with only four more days of sitting after today, and that is to address the situation in the high schools of this province. Each member elected to this body bears responsibility for what is happening in short changing the students of this province. We have in front of us a possibility to do something about it.

Earlier this term, I invited each and every member of this Legislature, in a non-partisan fashion, to do something very basic: attend a school in their riding for a day. I'm pleased to tell you that every single member of the Liberal caucus has done that. Fourteen members only from the government caucus have at least put it on their agenda.

The important thing is that people are looking for more than that. The parents and students want peace in the schools. They want a solution. The Ontario Principals' Council tells us that 76% of schools have little or no extracurricular activity. There is an opportunity today to do something about it. Today we are seeking the non partisan support of the members opposite to put in place something that will actually bring back extracurricular activities, actually bring some solace to the parents and the students who have been made to suffer because of provincial policies. We will see, I think, in each of the communities in each of our ridings, based on the response from each of the members opposite and the members in every part of this House, how much they really want to put students first.

LAKEFIELD'S 125th ANNIVERSARY

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I am very proud of the many communities in my riding of Peterborough and the hard work of the many volunteers who give so much toward making the community alive in spirit and uniqueness.

This year, 2000, Lakefield celebrated its 125th anniversary. The Lakefield Special Events Committee was formed to encourage, coordinate and promote events and activities that celebrate the community's unique heritage as we move into the new millennium. Many community groups and individuals have been hard at work on an exciting range of projects sure to appeal to everyone who lives in or visits their community.

The main project being coordinated by the SEC has been the development of a trail network, travelling 5.5 kilometres throughout the village of Lakefield. The trail will be ideal for walking, cycling, rollerblading, cross-country skiing, and so on. Along the trail will be information kiosks and gazebos, benches, trees, historical information and directional signage. The trail will eventually be linked to the Trans-Canada Trail upon completion of the County Road 32-River Road section of the trail.

I invite all members of this House to visit the community of Lakefield or any the communities in my riding

of Peterborough to witness communities that are alive in spirit with entertaining things to do and see.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin reports by committees, there are some pages who will be coming back next week for our extra week and there are some who are unable to do that, so for some of the pages today will be the last day. I'm sure all members would like to join in thanking this wonderful group of pages for their help over the last few weeks.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 147, An Act to revise the law related to employment standards / Projet de loi 147, Loi portant révision du droit relatif aux normes d'emploi.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1347 to 1352.

The Speaker: Would the members kindly take their seats, please.

Mr Gilchrist has moved adoption of the report of the standing committee on general government respecting Bill 147, An Act to revise the law related to employment standards.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Cunningham, Dianne
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.

Hardeman, Ernie
Hastings, John
Hodgson, Chris
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Snobelen, John
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike

Crozier, Bruce
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Kennedy, Gerard
Kornos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lankin, Frances
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley

Martin, Tony
McGuinty, Dalton
McLeod, Lyn
McMeekin, Ted
Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 47; the nays are 27.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FLAGS AT HALF-MAST ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000

SUR LES DRAPEAUX EN BERNE

Mr Chudleigh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 164, An Act to require that flags be flown at half-mast to honour Ontario police officers and correctional services officers slain in the line of duty / Projet de loi 164, Loi exigeant la mise en berne des drapeaux en l'honneur des agents de police et des agents de services correctionnels de l'Ontario tués dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member, for a short statement.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Thank you, Speaker, and I thank Heather Whitlox for delivering the bill to you.

We are all aware of the commendable job carried out by police officers and correctional officers day after day in Ontario. When one of these officers is killed in the line of duty, it is with great remorse that we are required to say goodbye. A way to honour these officers one last time is to require that all Ontario provincial buildings fly their flags at half-mast immediately following the tragedy of their passing.

While there's a long-standing tradition and an accepted protocol for the flying of flags at half-mast in this country, there is currently no legislation requiring this practice to occur. That is what the flags at half-mast bill will do here in Ontario.

STUDENTS FIRST ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 ACCORDANT LA PRIORITÉ AUX ÉLÈVES

Mr McGuinty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to restore goodwill and positive learning conditions in Ontario's schools / *Projet de loi 165, Loi visant à restaurer la bonne volonté et des conditions d'apprentissage positives dans les écoles de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The leader of the official opposition, for a short statement.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): The short title of this act says everything about it. It's called the Students First Act. The purpose is to address the waning goodwill inside our high schools. My hope is that through its passage we can begin to recreate a positive learning climate, which the Education Improvement Commission told us just recently was so desperately missing.

My bill provides a plan for government and teachers to come together to improve education and to restore extracurricular activities for our students, and by so doing put our children first.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow for the singing of our national anthem, O Canada, at the beginning of daily proceedings of this House.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

1400

PROMISE MADE PROMISE BROKEN ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR UNE PROMESSE NON TENUE

Mr Parsons moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act respecting accountability for barriers impeding people with disabilities from full participation in the life of Ontario / *Projet de loi 166, Loi concernant la responsabilité à l'égard des obstacles qui entravent la pleine participation des personnes handicapées à la vie de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Every day this province goes without the promised Ontarians with Disabilities Act, tax dollars are being misused to create yet another barrier, impeding the disabled community from fully participating in our society. Every new barrier adds to the bill that taxpayers will have to pay to remove the same barrier later. The removal of existing barriers is vital. The continued construction of new barriers is obscene. Ontarians need to know how much of their money is being wasted by this government.

This bill will require that where any new barriers are constructed with government of Ontario money, there shall be a public sign posted in plain view stating, "You Ontario Tax Dollars at Waste: This is a new barrier impeding Ontarians with disabilities, which Premier Mike Harris helped finance with your tax dollars."

In addition, all advertising paid for, directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, by Ontario taxpayers' dollars shall have the following prominently displayed in print or in the spoken word, as the case may be, and in closed captioning: "This advertisement is brought to you by the Ontario government, which has broken its promises to enact a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act."

Mike Harris's living legacy to Ontario is more and more barriers paid for by hard-working taxpayers. The short title of this act is Promise Made Promise Broken Act, 2000.

MEMBERS' OATH OF ALLEGIANCE ACT, 2000 LOI DE 2000 SUR LE SERMENT D'ALLÉGEANCE DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr Agostino moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 167, An Act to provide for an Oath of Allegiance for the Members of the Legislative Assembly / *Projet de loi 167, Loi prévoyant un serment d'allégeance pour les députés à l'Assemblée législative.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): As it now stands in legislation, as members are sworn into office they are required to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen, Her Majesty Elizabeth II, which I believe is quite appropriate. What this bill would do is also add Canada to this oath of allegiance. It is now illegal for us as members of the Legislative Assembly if we include Canada in the oath of allegiance. This will allow the inclusion of Canada without taking anything away from Her Majesty Elizabeth II and the oath as it now stands. I urge this House to support this for second and third readings down the line.

PROHIBITING PROFITING FROM RECOUNTING CRIMES ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 INTERDISANT LES GAINS TIRÉS DU RÉCIT D'ACTES CRIMINELS

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 168, An Act to protect victims by prohibiting profiting from recounting of crime / *Projet de loi 168, Loi*

visant à protéger les victimes en interdisant les gains tirés du récit d'actes criminels.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The Attorney General for a short statement?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'll speak to it during ministers' statements, Speaker.

SUPPLY ACT, 2000

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2000

Mr Sterling moved, on behalf of Mr Eves, first reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2001 / *Projet de loi 169, Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2001.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister for a short statement?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): This is commonly referred to as the Supply Act. It is the formal approval by the Legislative Assembly of all the money that is spent by the government of Ontario over the year. This follows the process, first, of the budget back in May, a committee hearing estimates over the past year and finally, yesterday or the day before, the concurrence by this assembly in the estimates process that was done in committee.

This bill gives the government the right to spend some \$56 billion in accordance with those estimates and the process that has gone on.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Our government stands on the side of victims. During the past five years, we have taken a leadership role in assisting victims of crime and holding criminals accountable. We have created the first-ever Office for Victims of Crime and asked this Legislature to make the office a permanent advisory agency, and we have expanded victims' services across the province.

Today, with the introduction of the Prohibiting Profiting from Recounting Crimes Act, we are taking another step to assist victims of crime and fulfill our budget and Blueprint commitments to strengthen victims' rights. If the bill is passed, it would take the profit out of crime by allowing for the seizure of the proceeds convicted crim-

inals may get from recounting their crimes in books or reviews.

There is a specific focus to the bill. It targets forfeiture of profits being sought by criminals from recounting their own crimes. Criminals should not be able to profit from their crimes by revictimizing victims. On the approval of the court, any money generated by a criminal who has written or recounted his or her crime would be forfeited and a fund would be established to compensate the victims of the crime from the forfeited proceeds. If the legislation is passed, Ontario would be the only province in Canada to protect victims in this way.

This bill is supported by victims' advocates groups. I'm sure they would tell you that victims of crime live in fear that criminals can revictimize them and make money doing so. Victims of crime—those persons directly affected by the crime and their spouses, children or family members—should not have to experience this agony. They deserve to be protected. This bill would help to accomplish that.

Under this bill, publishers and other media companies who enter into contracts with a criminal for recounting his or her crimes would have a duty to report the contract or face a fine of up to \$50,000. Officers and directors of the company could also be held personally liable for failing to report the contract.

This bill would apply to anyone convicted of a serious criminal offence and someone acting on that person's behalf, such as a spouse, partner, children or other related persons. It would also have a broad application in terms of the offences it would cover. Anyone convicted of any violent indictable offence with a maximum sentence of five years or more would be included. In addition, it would include anyone convicted of a serious property offence under the Criminal Code as prescribed by regulation.

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A wide variety of contracts would also be included in the bill to further protect victims of crime. It would include all contracts covering the use of documents that may be related to the crime, an interview with the convicted person or an appearance of the convicted person to recount his or her crime.

It is clear that Ontario continues to lead the way in protecting victims of crime. This bill again shows that Ontario is taking a leadership role in the area of victims' rights.

I urge my colleagues to support victims of crime by supporting this bill. I acknowledge and thank the foundation work that was done with respect to victims of crime and the bill that received royal assent in 1995 by the Honourable Cam Jackson, and before that the private members' bills that preceded that bill by Bud Wildman and three or four times by James Renwick of the NDP, beginning in 1982, I believe.

I urge all colleagues on all sides of the House to support this bill, just as the federal Liberal MPs supported a bill that was rebuffed by the Senate a few years ago dealing with the same type of issues.

I urge my colleagues also, of course, around the House to give the bill prompt passage.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): The bill in question in many ways repackages and, I think it's fair to say, builds upon Bill 210, which was mentioned in the minister's statement. That bill received royal assent in December 1994. On third reading it received unanimous consent from this House. The Liberal caucus supported Bill 210, and we'll look closely at the legislation that you've just handed over to me.

I'll say this: if in fact victims of crime do not themselves have to do the work of trying to recoup profits from criminals recounting of crime, then that would of course be a positive step and we would want to support that positive step.

The victims' rights movement obviously is primarily about ensuring that victims are not revictimized. It's difficult to talk about the specifics and the hypotheticals as to whom this bill might affect, because of course we end up renaming the people who caused the reign of terror in the province of Ontario. I know the minister was reluctant to do that in his media conference, and I understand why, but the reality is that we are going to have to face the fact that there's nothing we can do in this House to stop a film about Bernardo and Homolka going forward. There's nothing we can do to stop that further revictimization of those victims. I just want everybody to understand in this House, because I heard it from the minister in the media conference, and I agree, from looking at the outline of the legislation, that this bill will in no way stop that film from going forward, and none of us should be fooled into thinking otherwise.

The victims' rights movement, rather, if it's going to have real teeth, needs tools. We need to give victims tools so that, for example, they can recoup profits from criminals. The minister wasn't able to give an example of how that might have helped a victim in the last few years, and I look forward to hearing examples and real instances from the minister, because he has to defend this bill and we on this side of the House need to know that this isn't just much ado about a hypothetical. We need to know that this is not just about headline grabbing but rather this is about advancing the cause of victims' rights, because that's what we are very serious about on this side of the House.

Victims' rights, obviously, are not monopolized by any government administration in this province or in this country. The United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power was passed in 1985. It talked about providing access to justice and fair treatment, providing restitution, providing compensation and assistance. Along those lines, we on this side of the House have looked for and sought from the government real, enforceable victims' rights, and sadly we have not got them with respect to their Victims' Bill of Rights, which we've heard time and time again has been held by the Ontario Court of Justice to be unenforceable in any way.

We look forward to and hope the government will move on all the important recommendations in the June 2000 report on victims' services in Ontario, A Voice for Victims, because the vast majority of those recommendations have not been put forward.

Last, we can use our space here in the House and outside to represent our communities in some fashion. If we can't, by legislation, stop these films from happening we can let the people of our communities know what we think about them. I know that one member on this side of the House, the member for St Catharines, has done a lot of that and has done a lot in speaking to his community to try to heal those wounds.

I'd like to hear from the member for St Catharines: now, Mr Speaker.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I intend to support this legislation because I believe it focuses on an issue that is extremely important; that is, someone making a profit from a crime by being able to recount the story of a horrible crime. Unlike the Attorney General or the critic for the opposition, I will say that Paul Bernard should not make a plug nickel from telling his story to anybody.

If this bill will act as a deterrent, as the Attorney General hopes it will, to people trying to set up such an interview and such a contract, then it will be a positive step forward. It provides an enforcement mechanism for previous legislation that we have. I wish we could stop commercial film being made about the Paul Bernard story, and perhaps the weight of public opinion will allow us to do that. But I think this bill is a step in the right direction.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I caution my colleagues to be more careful in their enthusiasm, albeit suppressed, for this legislation. Take note that the bill proposed today repeals the Victims' Right to Proceeds of Crime Act. It specifically repeals that legislation, which this assembly passed in 1994, that would guarantee that if and when there are profits by criminals as a result of recounting their crimes, those profits become the property of the victims of those crimes and rather would transfer those proceeds and profits to a broader-based general fund that remains in the hands of this government, the dispensation of which remains with this government.

The Attorney General had yet another press conference. Last week he was Eliot Ness. Today, rather than crusading against organized crime, he resurrected legislation that already exists, that has already been agreed to that was passed in 1994, and tries to leave the impression that somehow he is on the side of victims this time, not like when it came to the Victims' Bill of Rights—he was nowhere to be seen when it came to the real rights of victims in this province—not like when it comes to adequate policing in this province, where we still suffer fewer police officers per capita than in 1994; not with respect to access to courts, which are increasingly backlogged and overcrowded. His new fees for access to civil courts have discouraged access to those courts on

repeated basis by any number of victims of crimes who want to seek redress in those courts.

The reality of today's press conference, that slapdash bit of legislation we are presented with today, was the well-deserved embarrassment by this government for its refusal to in any way take any steps to avoid, deter and put the blocks and brakes to a Hollywood dramatization of the most despicable crimes that have been committed in this province, dare I say in this country.

Don't you people understand that some Hollywood production company purports to hire glamorous Hollywood actors and actresses to tape a film here in the city of Toronto that will have the net effect of glamorizing the despicable horrors imposed by Bernardo and Homolka on their young victims and their surviving families?

Howard Hampton has called upon this government to amend its budget to ensure that not a penny of Ontario Film Development Corp money goes to that film that is proposed to be filmed here in Ontario, here in Toronto. This government doesn't want to take the steps necessary to do that.

This government is acknowledging that it is prepared to help finance a Hollywood glamorization of the Bernardo-Homolka atrocities. This government won't take one step toward calling upon Toronto's film development office to ensure that the producers of that type of film are not welcome—never mind just here in the city of Toronto but anywhere in the province of Ontario.

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This Attorney General, who talks a big game about victims, is prepared to roll over, throw the doors open and lay down the welcome mat for any Hollywood producer who wants to employ glamorous Hollywood stars to film and portray the despicable acts and crimes of Bernardo and Homolka.

This government won't join Howard Hampton in standing firmly in telling those producers of those types of films that their pornographic production may well be legally made in other jurisdictions but they're not going to be tolerated here in the province of Ontario, and that this province isn't going to have any part of any film depicting, with Hollywood stars, the murders of those young women down in Niagara region and the atrocities committed to them and the continued victimization of their families.

This Attorney General has abandoned victims from day one. This Attorney General tries to deflect attention away from his miserable performance on behalf of victims or, quite frankly, on behalf of safe communities in this province, with his phony-baloney press conferences, his slap-dash legislation, his attempts to direct attention over there when the reality is that victims are left exposed and vulnerable because your Victim's Bill of Rights was declared clearly to be a big zero when it came to any rights for victims.

Your promise to restore rights to victims has been broken day after day, week after week, year after year. You've got no business telling this Legislative Assembly

or the people of Ontario that you give a tinker's damn about victims. You've proven it time and time again.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My first question today is for the Minister of Education. Minister, you will know that I provided you with an advance copy of my bill and, in fact, I went so far as to put you on notice that I intended to ask you about this very bill today in order to launch this in as non-partisan a manner as we possibly can.

My peace plan, and my bill being part of that, is designed to improve education and to restore extra-curricular activities for Ontario students. I believe it's win-win-win.

You want teachers to teach 1,250 minutes a week? My bill does that.

Teachers don't want to teach an extra class. My bill does that.

Students want more time with their teacher and they want their extracurricular activities back. My bill does that as well.

My simple question to you, on behalf of Ontario students, is, will you support both my peace plan and this bill?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I know at this Christmas time of year it is appropriate to give gifts. One is supposed to consider the intent of the gift and not the substance of the gift. I thank the honourable member for the intent of this particular gift, but with all due respect to the work that he and OSSTF have done on this, the gift is just not up to the task of dealing with the challenges that are in our classrooms.

Yes, the honourable member talks about 1,250 minutes, which is what the government has established in its legislation, but I don't think we can solve the problem of decreasing teacher workload by increasing the student workload, which is what this does.

Secondly, he recommends public audit processes, and, with all due respect, we already have public audit processes, both for school boards and for the government.

Finally, he talks about having experts to give advice to the government in some kind of committee. I think that's an excellent suggestion and I'll certainly consider it.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I want to impress upon you the urgency of the situation. You don't have to take my word for it; just take the word of the Education Improvement Commission. Recently it stated in their report that "students believe that the ongoing tensions among the Ministry of Education, the school boards and their teachers have affected their education" and they're concerned for themselves and for the students who will follow them.

The commission goes on to add, "We cannot overstate our concern about the reduction in extracurricular activities. If the current impasse continues, it is clear that more students will drop out and fewer still will succeed." Finally, the report "urges the Ministry of Education to immediately renew dialogue with teachers' federations and consult with all education partners, as appropriate, with a view to immediate reinstatement of extracurricular activities."

Madam Minister, we have been consulting for months with school boards, teachers, students, parents and principals, and, in keeping with the request of your own Education Improvement Commission, we have acted immediately. I put forward a peace plan today. We can pass this before this House rises and take a giant step forward in the interests of our students. Why will you not support my peace plan?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I find it interesting, now that we have 71% of our bargaining units with signed agreements, where unions and school boards sat down around the table and signed agreements, that the honourable member wants us, before Christmas, in the next couple of days, to pass a bill that completely upends all those collective agreements. I find that rather strange, coming from the honourable member.

I agree with him that disruptions in classrooms and politics in the classroom are wrong. They undermine student achievement and should not be happening.

I would also like to remind the honourable member that there is no need to renew dialogue, because we are and continue to dialogue with not only the teacher unions but also with the school boards, the parent groups and all the other important education partners to find suggestions.

The other thing is that this government campaigned on setting higher standards in our classrooms to get improved student achievement. The honourable members across the way may not want to thank teachers for the hard work they've done to increase student achievement in this province, but the international tests show they have—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, resolving this mess is going to take a conciliatory approach. It's going to require a compromise on your part, on the part of teachers and on the part of school boards, and it's got to be done in the interests of our students. I don't hear anything conciliatory coming from you right now. As the father of three children in high school today, I can tell you they're not getting the kind of education to which they are entitled, and the same thing applies for students right across this province.

My plan is far from perfect. I admit that. I am prepared to work with you and anybody else who has a genuine commitment to making sure we put the interests of our students first.

Madam Minister, I implore you, on behalf of Ontario students, and in keeping with the recommendation of

your own Education Improvement Commission: why can you not sit down with our teachers, our school boards and all other education partners and consider my proposal? It is relatively simple, relatively neat and relatively tidy. All we're talking about is making teachers teach eight more minutes for each of the three periods. It fulfills your mandate that they teach for 1,250 minutes, and it meets the interests of our students. Why can't we put students first in our province?

Hon Mrs Ecker: When we brought back-to-work legislation into this House to put the students first in Hamilton-Wentworth, the honourable member certainly didn't put the students first. He sided with the teacher unions and opposed that legislation.

I agree with the honourable member that compromise is extremely important in any sector, including the education sector. That's why this spring, when the unions said the workload standards as we currently define them meant seven out of eight and they wanted six out of eight, we changed the policy and put new money into the system to make it six and a half out of eight. It was a compromise.

Second, we put it in legislation in a way that would allow unions and boards to recognize the varying workloads of teachers. A teacher who does extracurricular activities should have that reflected in their workload. They chose—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

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OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. As we speak, there is a David and Goliath struggle happening on the Oak Ridges moraine. Many of the smaller communities there are doing everything they can to withstand the tide of developers who are insisting on proceeding with massive development on the Oak Ridges moraine. At stake is the very future of one of Canada's most important aquifers.

On November 13 the people of King township voted in a green council. That council, acting in accordance with the expressed wishes of the electorate, recently said, "We don't want to go ahead with that big pipe sewer system that threatens widespread development on the moraine." I can tell you that the lawyers for the developers are already sharpening their swords, and the mayor herself expressed a real concern that they're going to be in for a long and expensive legal battle.

My question to you, Minister: what are you going to do to come to the assistance of the people living in King township to protect them and the moraine against developers?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I refer the question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'd be happy to refer the honourable

member to the 1996 provincial policy statement, which indicates that natural heritage features in areas such as that have to be protected from incompatible development. Development is not permitted, according to the provincial policy statement, on significant wetlands south and east of the Canadian Shield, or significant portions of the habitat of endangered and threatened species. Developers have to show there is no negative impact on the natural features or on the ecological function for which the area is identified.

We're doing our part to ensure that the views that I think are held by all Ontarians, when it comes to protecting the natural features of our environment in an economy that is growing, are maintained, and we would hasten to add that the honourable member can do his part as well.

Mr McGuinty: I directed my question to the Minister of the Environment on the assumption that, if anybody over there would, he would be the one who would stand up in defence of the environment in Ontario. I guess once again we were sadly mistaken on this side of the House to proceed on the assumption that you were in fact going to stand up for the environment.

The issue in King township, as you well know, Minister of the Environment, is not an isolated one. Property taxpayers in Uxbridge, Aurora and Richmond Hill are footing the bill for millions of dollars in legal fees in a brave attempt to keep unchecked development at bay on the moraine. The residents of East Gwillimbury, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Caledon East and Bewdley are next, and they can't win these battles alone. Anybody watching this must now be deeply disappointed and feeling dejected, because when I put the question to you on their behalf on the assumption you would stand up for the environment, you fobbed it off to somebody else.

I'll ask you again, on behalf of all those people living on the moraine who want to stand up in defence of the moraine for future generations of Ontarians, why is it you won't help them out?

Hon Mr Clement: Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, this government, as the honourable knows, is very concerned about the natural environment—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Come to order, please. You're not going to shout across. Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: In this government, my colleague in environment and myself, and the Minister of Natural Resources and all other line ministers who have concern over this, are working in tandem to develop not only what we have now, but future plans to ensure our water is protected, our species are protected and our land features are protected in an economy that is growing.

I think that's the key issue here. When he was in government, they didn't have that problem because growth and development was not happening because they drove the economy into recession. Here on this side of the House our challenge, which we accept, is how to keep the jobs growing, how to keep the economy moving, and balance that with an environment that is there for the

present generation and future generations. We think the municipalities have the tools to do that, we think we have the tools to do that, and we are working together, in concert, to get that done.

Mr McGuinty: This minister's response is most telling. I ask a question about the Oak Ridges moraine and our collective responsibility to save it for future generations, and he talks about the need for development and economic growth. That says everything about where this government is coming from on this issue.

I have a special invitation to extend to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, join us in protecting the moraine. Just assume your responsibility, no matter how much you may find that difficult to do. Assume your proper and appropriate responsibility and begin to stand up for the environment. We've already done the work for you. My colleague Michael Colle introduced a bill in this House, Bill 115, An Act to conserve and protect the Oak Ridges Moraine. It's there; the work is done. Together we can help protect the moraine for the generations that are there today and generations yet to come.

My invitation to you, Minister: why not join us? Let's fight together and let's save the moraine.

Hon Mr Clement: Let me get beyond the rhetoric and into the facts. The facts are that as a result of the Mike Harris policies that have guaranteed jobs and opportunity for millions of Ontarians, the population growth in the GTA over the next 20 years is going to increase by 40%. Two million more residents are going to reside in our region. Maybe the Ottawa member has a secret plan that we don't know about as to where these people are going to be housed affordably. If he has a plan, he should share it with this House. In the meantime, I challenge him to go beyond empty rhetoric and join us to make sure we have growth and opportunity for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren, and that we protect the environment for future generations. When he has a plan, he has the right to stand up here.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Acting Premier. In the spirit of the season, I want to ask you to ask your government to do something meaningful for working families in this province. The Minister of Municipal Affairs just said that we have a growing economy here. Will you raise the minimum wage? For six long years, you have frozen the working poor out of a fair and decent minimum wage while home and heating costs have soared. There are twice as many children in working poor families across Canada today since 1989, when the government declared war on child poverty. Minimum wage earners in Ontario need another 44 cents an hour just to make up for the higher cost of living.

We're asking you here today to give working poor families the best gift of all. Will you raise the minimum wage?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The Minister of Labour wants to answer this.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): The minimum wage issue we dealt with on a few occasions in this House. The response is consistent, and I'll reiterate it to you today.

We are in the top three, I think, provinces in the country as far as minimum wage is concerned. We pay in the top three provinces: British Columbia and Quebec, and then Ontario. We have a very competitive minimum wage rate. It's a rate that is generous compared to the other provinces that are less than us.

Furthermore, you talk about not getting an increase. You have to take it in a block of time. In the 10 years during the 1990s, the minimum wage was raised by 37%. For a 10-year period, a 37% increase is a fairly significant amount of money. We believe it must maintain a certain relationship with the competitive forces around you, as well as being fair. Now, being in the top three is fair, and a 37% increase during the 1990s we also think is a reasonable increase. So our position is maintaining the same.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm proud to have been part of a government that recognized the needs of working families and raised the minimum wage five times over those five years. On the contrary, Minister, under your government these same families have had their wages frozen for five years, a five-year period where this province has seen quite substantial economic growth.

Campaign 2000 recently reported that there are 470,000 children in Ontario who live in poverty. One in three of those children comes from a family who is in a working-poor circumstance. Their parents are working and they still can't make ends meet. Your government made life more difficult for these working-poor families because you took away the drug cards from families who could scarcely afford to pay the cost of prescription drugs.

You have an opportunity now, in a time of surplus, to do something for children from working-poor families. I ask you again, will you raise the minimum wage?

1440

Hon Mr Stockwell: You're preferring to pick out some selective statistics. The fact remains that when we cut the taxes in this province, the main beneficiaries to the tax cuts were those who were earning at the lower end of the pay scale. They received the largest cuts in taxes. That can be directly related to more money in their pockets at the end of the day. This is not a complicated issue. It's very understandable. When you cut taxes, you pay less taxes, you have more money to spend. So by cutting taxes, we did what you didn't do: we used our money to raise the minimum wage; we created the surplus; we created the jobs; we caused the unemployment levels to go down. We used good, hard-working taxpayers' knowledgeable decisions to increase the

money those people were making at the lower end, not simply making universal decisions that cost us prosperity and job creation.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Minister, none of that holds up. You want to talk about prosperity? The United States economy has driven the boom in Canada, especially here in Ontario, and the fact of the matter is that they saw fit to raise their minimum wage twice and are now considering raising it a third time. That means their minimum wage is higher than our minimum wage, and that's our greatest trading partner, yet you want to talk about competitiveness with surrounding jurisdictions.

Earlier you wanted to talk about paying taxes and you mentioned blocks of time. I'll talk to you about paying taxes and blocks of time. In the last quarter, the 173 major public companies in Canada made \$7.6 billion. That's up 20% from a year ago. You're giving those corporations \$4 billion more in tax cuts but you don't see fit to give the working poor in this province at least a modest income.

Minister, by no measure can you justify not increasing the minimum wage to the working poor in Ontario. The NDP calls on you, Minister: raise the minimum wage. Share the wealth. Working people deserve their fair share of this economic boom.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Well, you'd better talk to your socialist buddies in BC, because the American economy didn't do anything for that province. Do you know what? On this side of the House "corporate profits" aren't dirty words like when you were in government. It's good to have profits; it's good to have prosperity; it's good to create jobs. You were raising the minimum wage. Nobody was working, for heaven's sake.

The Speaker: Sorry to interrupt. Minister, take a seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Last warning to the member for Hamilton West. If he continues, he's going to be out. Last warning.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Tax cuts create money for people to spend as they see fit. It's a good, reasonable and thoughtful public policy position. They create money for people to spend whether you're making X or Y. When you reduce taxes, you have more disposable income. The fact remains that this province has led the country in growth, has led every G8 nation—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take a seat. Last warning for the members for Nickel Belt and Niagara Centre. If you continue the shouting, you're going to be out.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It has led every G8 nation in growth. We've led them because we have had tax cuts that go directly into taxpayers' pockets, that they spend and they can use to create jobs. We have a fundamental philosophical disagreement. We believe in economic boom and prosperity; you believe in debts and deficits and despair. Welfare—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): What a sad, sad place this is.

I have a question for the Minister of Education. You'll recall last week I asked you a question which had arisen out of the fact that the Education Improvement Commission said, "We've got a critical situation here," and urged you and other federations to solve it. I said to you that Earl Manners, the president of the OSSTF, says—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I know you don't like him; I know that. But he wrote you a letter saying, "I want to meet with you and I have a mandate to solve this problem." So I asked you last week why haven't you set a date to meet with him.

I understand, since I asked that question, that your office is planning some meeting sometime in the future. I've got to tell you some of us were ministers, and if I felt, as a former minister, that something was really important, I would make the time. Knowing how important this question is, why haven't you set a time and a date yet?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I have actually found Mr Manners in one-on-one meetings to be personally quite charming. He presented me with a personally autographed photograph of himself some time ago.

I am quite prepared to meet with Mr Manners, and I should remind the honourable member that there is more than one teachers' union in this province. I'm quite prepared to meet with all of them. I do that on a regular basis. It is part of my job. We have a lot of issues we need to resolve. We can point to a number of considerable successes that that partnership has contributed to, but we also recognize that we have a number of significant problems we need to continue to work to resolve for the benefit of our students.

Mr Marchese: The situation is critical. Everybody is telling you, including the Education Improvement Commission, that you've got to solve it. Students are dropping out. As a result of not having activities, more and more students are dropping out. I suggest to you, Minister, that you have your own agenda. Let me tell you what that agenda is. I've told you before what that agenda is: you've got a plan, and this plan does not involve teachers doing extracurricular activities. Your plan is to say to boards, "You will be mandated to do them and you will find volunteers." I told you the last time I raised this question, a couple of weeks ago, that when you have volunteers doing it, you get more injuries, meaning more students will be injured. You'll do two things—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Mr Wettlaufer, what do you know? You're doing two things, Minister. With that plan, you'll escalate the confrontation with teachers and you will increase injuries to students. That is what I think your plan is, and you're avoiding a meeting with Earl Manners

because you're not looking for a real solution that would benefit teachers and students. Admit that you're doing this or deny it, but that is what I think your agenda is all about.

Hon Mrs Ecker: For the honourable member to think that any member in this House is somehow secretly planning, plotting to injure children, I find that rather offensive—very offensive. The only plan we have on this side of the House is for improved student achievement by setting higher standards, having a better curriculum, having a better report card and putting more money into classrooms. Yes, extracurricular activities should be services that our children are getting. I should remind the honourable member that today, as we speak, thousands of students are receiving extracurricular activities from thousands of teachers and community volunteers.

Again, I find it very offensive that he would question the commitment and the ability of community volunteers, most of them parents with children in the school. Many of those students are getting those activities and they are very important to them. Unfortunately, we still have teachers who are choosing to work to rule and we are going to continue to work to try and resolve that issue because those students deserve those activities.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Your government is downloading the life-and-death responsibility of ambulance services on to our unwilling municipal partners. You're doing this, by the way, against the advice of your own Who Does What commission. When I raised this issue in the House with the Premier, and in particular about the fact that municipalities are telling us that they are not ready, they will not be able to cope with this new responsibility, the Premier said, "It's not an issue. It's all under control. Municipalities can definitely handle this."

We learned from senior officials from the Ministry of Health, who told the public accounts committee today that out of 49 transfers of ambulance services to be completed by your own deadline—the very end of this year, December 31—only 18 are ready to go. That leaves 31 not ready. The ministry is taking the position that ready or not, those 31 transfers will be completed by the end of this year. Minister, do you understand that by so doing your government is going to endanger lives in Ontario?

1450

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I know the Leader of the Opposition has asked this question a number of times of the Minister of Health and she has responded to him.

I'd like to correct the record, first of all, that the responsibility is shared 50-50 by the province and the municipality. There are standards that have been developed to improve the level of service in this province. There's a working group that's working with our partners

and municipal representatives are on that. The fact that 18 are ready to go with these new improved standards in this new partnership of 50-50 is a good thing. If it takes a little longer to make sure it's done properly, the Minister of Health is doing that. I'm sure he's not advocating that some artificial deadline be imposed arbitrarily by this side of the House or this Legislature.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, it's your deadline. You've got 31 transfers to be completed in the next 10 working days. Ministry of Health officials have told us they intend to proceed with this. Do you know what else they're telling us? Notwithstanding the recommendation and good advice of the Provincial Auditor, who said you're going to have to spend \$100 million to make this work and to make sure people aren't jeopardized by this hasty transfer of responsibility, Ministry of Health officials are telling us that first they'll complete the transfers and then at some point in the future they'll talk money.

What are you doing here? Not only are you rushing the transfer, your government is doing it on the cheap. In the process you are going to undoubtedly jeopardize lives. Unfortunately I predict I will have to come back to this very question at some time in the future when something terrible happens. I'm asking you again: do you not understand, Minister, that by proceeding so hastily, by proceeding contrary to the advice of the experts who said you shouldn't be downloading this responsibility, and by not properly funding it, you are about to endanger Ontario lives?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The Leader of the Opposition fails to mention that it's a 50-50 partnership. The city of Toronto used to pay 100% of ambulance costs. Now we're paying 50% of it. I just want to make sure you get the facts right, that it's a partnership.

Also, when he quotes the Provincial Auditor, he fails to point out that Erik Peters pointed out this morning in health in public accounts, "The last point: I would really like to appreciate and put on the record the amount of work that was committed to be done by the ministry and the update they provided." He recognizes that there's a lot of work and that a lot of progress has taken place. Brad Clark, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, is leading a working group and they're raising the standards for ambulance service in this province. They're spending more money than has ever been spent before, because we care about the health and safety of the residents. This is a partnership that will improve ambulance service delivery in this province.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. During the past several weeks, particularly since the last municipal election and the induction of the new Toronto council, city of Toronto officials have been in the media several times stating that the provincial government has downloaded a range of costs on the city that the property tax base cannot cover over the long haul. The city has said that Toronto needs a new deal or it

will go bankrupt. Could the minister please respond to these allegations.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for Scarborough Centre for the question. Indeed we have heard recently from both Mayor Lastman and CAO Mike Garrett about the state of Toronto's finances. I want to assure this House that Toronto is in a good position, because of the amalgamation that took place in 1997, to continue to find the efficiencies and savings required to deliver better services to Toronto taxpayers. In fact, in Toronto's 2000 budget, it indicated that the city achieved over \$137 million in annualized savings due to amalgamation so far, and Toronto has sufficient tax room to provide more services. By reducing the education portion of the property tax by \$560 million, this government gave that additional property tax revenue room to the city.

Mayor Lastman says Toronto is the greatest city in the world, and indeed they have a chance for a fiscally sustainable future.

Ms Mushinski: I'm pleased that amalgamation has indeed resulted in a number of savings, Minister, and I can assure you it has resulted in many tax cuts at the municipal level for constituents in my riding of Scarborough Centre.

As you are aware, of course, Toronto is the economic engine of this province if not of Canada. My constituents are concerned about the future of the city. Could you tell this House what you are doing to make sure Toronto taxpayers are getting value for their hard-earned tax dollars and what the province has done to assist the city of Toronto through this period of change?

Hon Mr Clement: The answer to that question would be that we have understood that to realize all the savings with respect to amalgamation does take time. Therefore, we have provided to the city significant financial assistance over the years to support the transition and restructuring needs: a \$50-million grant in 1998 and \$200 million in interest-free loans in 1998 and 1999. Indeed, the city has benefited through other provincial government policies: a \$76-million reduction in its public health and land ambulance costs as a result of the province cost-sharing those costs 50-50, a \$200-million reduction in costs as a result of municipal social assistance and social housing costs through pooling in the GTA, a \$250-million rehabilitation program on 401, which Minister Turnbull has shepherded through.

These are just some of the things that have been made available to the city, and indeed more has to be done. But it has to be done by the city. I heard recently that as of March 2000 the city had not collected \$418.2 million of tax arrears. Who's asleep at the switch there? We need their assistance. They've got to do their job—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. There's a

potential disaster, comparable to what happened in the town of Walkerton, waiting to happen in Ontario because of lack of regulations and because you don't have the staff to enforce any of the guidelines you have. I'm talking about the spread of sludge—that is, sewage treatment effluent—all over the farmlands of Ontario.

Here's what the mayor of Mono says: "To be blunt, the ministry's 'guidelines' governing sludge spreading border on being a joke. They need serious review and toughening up. Personally I have several major objections to what has been until now, 'acceptable' spreading practices. Winter spreading should be banned outright as there is no way the sludge permeates frosted soil. Similarly, spreading on pasture land has the potential to simply run off unless worked into the ground immediately after application. Finally, livestock must be kept off freshly 'sludged' land and that's not always happening." In addition to that, I can tell you it is sometimes being spread on water-drenched land.

Minister, you have a major problem out there right across Ontario. You are getting complaints, I'm getting complaints and individual councillors are getting complaints. Will you now commit to this House and to the people of Ontario that you will enact not guidelines but tough, enforceable, specific regulations dealing with the spread of sludge, and will you hire the necessary staff to be able to enforce those regulations?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): This government is indeed committed to protecting and improving Ontario's environment by ensuring that tough environmental protection measures are followed. The events in Walkerton have drawn considerable media attention to the issue the member opposite has raised. I want to assure him that I, along with my colleagues the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, met with stakeholders on September 23 to discuss this very important issue.

I want to say to the member from St Catharines that we are currently reviewing the practices for the spreading of biosolids and septage as a part of the consultations on nutrient management stemming from the Barrett-Galt report that took place. As part of our review of the practices and protocols associated with biosolids and septage, we might well consider a registry of biosolid use in Ontario. My staff have been asked to bring forward any recommendations about how current practices can be improved.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?
1500

Mr Bradley: Virtually nothing is happening out there. What is happening is that you hear from people across the province, including those who write *Better Farming* magazine, December edition, that it's a disaster out there.

When you go into the Ministry of the Environment office to find somebody to enforce these regulations, you find people who used to be employees now disguised as empty chairs, because they don't exist any more. You have to hire the staff. It's labour intensive; I understand

that. There is also a problem with capacity, of storage. Think of Walkerton.

Walkerton was "faced with a problem that might well plague other communities going the sludge route. It has a massive concrete holding tank full of human waste and nowhere to legally put it. By next month"—this was in June—"the tank will be full."

"Asked what will be done with it," your ministry official said, "We don't know."

"The Walkerton sewage tank contains, among other things, the potentially virulent excrement of those hit by the killer bacteria, *E. coli* 0157."

No doubt you've found something to do with the sludge that was in Walkerton. Think of all the other communities with that kind of sludge and the potential problems. Minister, do you not recognize this is a crisis? Will you now commit to promulgating immediately the necessary tough regulations and hiring the staff to enforce them?

Hon Mr Newman: Perhaps the member opposite didn't hear me when I answered his question the first time. The fact of the matter is we currently have a review underway within the Ministry of the Environment, right now, where we are looking at the spreading of biosolids and of septage as part of the consultations. We're obviously concerned if there are any trace amounts such as PCBs and sewage biosolids. That's why we are currently participating in a study with municipalities and the Water Environment Association of Ontario. The current requirements for the application of biosolids to agricultural lands are based on strict environmental protection measures and experience from many successful biosolids application projects over the past 25 years in this province.

The bottom line is that we have a review underway right now. We're looking at this very important issue.

GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. As you know, the Great Lakes Charter is an agreement, signed by the Great Lakes Governors and the Premiers of Ontario and Quebec that serves to protect our shared Great Lakes waters. There is interest among people down my way because a significant portion of my riding is under Lake Erie.

I understand that a draft annex to the Great Lakes Charter has been developed to build on the strengths of the charter, while establishing a pathway toward a new binding arrangement. Minister, can you tell us a bit more about this draft document that the Council of Great Lakes Governors has made available for public comment?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I want to thank the member and congratulate him for getting his question in over the heckling of the Minister of Labour.

As I am sure the member knows, the Premier has been very supportive of the Great Lakes Charter and working

with the eight Governors in the United States and the Premier of Quebec, working together to protect, conserve, restore and improve the water quality of the Great Lakes. We remain committed to working with our partners to make sure that we strengthen the protection of the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes Governors today released a draft Annex 2001, which seeks to expand the charter and seeks to expand our ability to control and improve the Great Lakes waterways. It seeks to retain water management authority within the basin. It wants to establish a common standard to review our proposed water uses and to strengthen our information as the foundation of our decision-making.

I think we've already made some great strides forward on that final point in the regional data management of our Great Lakes system.

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Minister, for that description of Annex 2001. I understand this draft document has been made available for public comment for 90 days, ending February 20, 2001. I also understand there are many positive elements to Annex 2001, such as promoting conservation and strengthening our shared information so future decisions on the management of our Great Lakes waters will enjoy the benefit of better, more up-to-date information.

However, I understand there remains some concern over the possibility of diversions on the US side of the Great Lakes, and this comes on the heels of several years of low water. Minister, could you speak to these concerns and tell this House and the people of Ontario how they can get involved and how they can make their views known.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I thank the member for the excellent question. Although the draft Annex will build on the strength of the charter and it serves as a bridge to even stronger commitments in the future, we do also have concerns. We believe that in some cases the diverting of water, even minor amounts of water, could result in negative effects on the Great Lakes. Let's be very clear: Ontario prohibits the transfer out of the Great Lakes basin by regulation. We continue to take a position that there should be no net loss of waters from the Great Lakes system. That's a position we've put to our partners and that our officials have put forward and will continue to do so.

I can say that we're very interested in hearing from the public on this matter, who have had a chance to read the draft. They can get hold of the Council of Great Lakes Governors directly—I know the Minister of Labour is waiting for this—by e-mail at cglg@cglg.org—and I can write that down for you, Chris—or by fax, which is horribly inconvenient, at 312-407-0038.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Minister, on the same day that you announced the gutting of the ONTC, the president of the agency, Mr John Wallace, left the ONTC. He refused to say if this was a planned departure or if he was leaving because he objected to your decision to dismantle the ONTC. What is clear is that Mr Wallace is the first of many, many ONTC employees who will now lose their jobs as a result of your decision to sell off these important transportation and telecommunication services in northeastern Ontario.

Minister, in order to determine if these employees are treated fairly as they are let go, will you table the details of Mr Wallace's exit package?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): As the House knows, the ONTC services improvement strategy was announced yesterday in North Bay, with a goal to improve the quality of services across the array of transportation and telecommunication initiatives in northeastern Ontario. Certainly the goal of that is, actually, to increase job creation in northeastern Ontario. I believe fundamentally in the job potential, the growth in northeastern Ontario. I want to make sure that the travel and telecommunication services are there to support that kind of growth. I believe in a very positive future for northeastern Ontario, and that's why we're moving to make sure the trains are going to run well. We're making sure that the buses are going to run even better, improving the Polar Bear Express, the Little Bear, working to improve the ferries. I'm confident this strategy is the best one possible for northeastern Ontario to support a brighter future for that corridor.

Ms Martel: Minister, the question was, will you table the details of the exit package for Mr Wallace? You see, Minister, you're the only one who thinks that there's going to be some improved situation at the ONTC. Anyone who knows anything about the ONTC and your decision to sell off its important assets recognizes that there won't be much of anything left at this crown agency once you're through.

But the ONTC is still, for the moment, a crown agency. There are some 800 employees who are now at risk of losing their jobs as a result of your decision. I think they and the public need to know, need to be assured, that their workers will be treated equitably and fairly just as we believe Mr Wallace has been treated. So I ask you again, will you table the details of the exit package for Mr Wallace so that other employees at the ONTC will know that their contribution will be treated in the same manner when they leave?

Hon Mr Hudak: Again, I'm very pleased to put the record forward as Minister of Northern Development and Mines of all the initiatives going on under the Mike Harris government to support northern Ontario, northeastern Ontario: seeing the doubling of the northern Ontario heritage fund; a record \$915-million investment in northern Ontario highways. I'll compare as well this strategy to improve the rail, to improve the bus services, to improve the ferry and telecommunication services. First there was an NDP package—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Hudak: Well, she was, quite frankly, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines that saw services—for example, cancelling bus routes in north-eastern Ontario, reducing the subsidies significantly, getting rid of the trucking arm, docking the ferry. That's a record of cuts with no idea of a growth strategy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take a seat. Member for Beaches-East York, it's her last warning as well. You yell out like that, you're gone for the day.

Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Hudak: I was just making the contrast with a program that cut the ONTC without offering any alternatives to support growth in northeastern Ontario. This strategy is there to promote job creation and to support the economy and improve customer service, a record I'll compare with yours any day of the week.

1510

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. He will know that Ontario recently published its population projections for the next 10 years—the government does this every five years after a census—and the key finding was that the population is anticipated to grow by about 1.4 million people. But 85% of that growth, according to the government figures, will come through immigration.

Our employers in this province need to continue to recruit skilled labour to come to Ontario. It perhaps is one of the most important factors for our employers. Yet I've been through the government business plans that I think you coordinate and there is not one mention of this issue in any of the business plans.

Minister, you predict 85% of our population growth, well over a million people, will come through immigration. They will be a key factor in our labour growth, a key factor for our employers. Why is it that in your business plans there is nothing that deals with this issue in terms of attracting the best and brightest to want to come to Ontario?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I couldn't disagree more. Our business plans are filled with details on how we can make Ontario more prosperous and a better place to live, one which attracts people from around the world who want to come here to invest, to live and to raise their families. All our business plans are designed with the goal to give transparency to the way the government wants to improve the lives of Ontarians.

Mr Phillips: I realize immigration levels are a federal responsibility, but where they locate in Canada is very much a provincial responsibility. At one time in Ontario we had many plans for ensuring that people felt comfortable coming here. If you look at places like California, they are aggressively recruiting people to come to California. That is one of Ireland's key economic tools. We are losing a substantial number of skilled people to

the United States. I and my caucus think that dealing with this issue is quite fundamental. Many of our employers are saying, "Where are we going to find the skilled people who want to come to Ontario?"

It's odd. Again, Minister, I challenge you to find one example in your business plans where this issue of how we ensure that talented people, skilled people who will represent, according to your figures, 85% of our population growth—I see nothing in your documents that speaks to the issue of how we attract those talented people. Certainly we are getting lots of discussion from employers saying, "We need skilled talent to come to Ontario." There is nothing in your business plans that speaks to that issue. Why is that, Mr Minister?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'm glad the member from the opposition acknowledged that immigration is federal and that they have criteria around that process.

What we are doing, through the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and through the Ministry of Finance and through all my colleagues, especially the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, is making sure we have the skills there for the future jobs. Fortunately, because of our economic policies which have laid a foundation for sustained and continued growth due to the tax cuts, we have people from around the world wanting to come to Ontario again. Unlike when your party and the NDP were in power and the jobs were leaving this province, jobs are coming back.

Last week, some of our ministers met with representatives from the IT community from Ottawa. We have numerous people wanting to immigrate from the United States to Canada to work in the high-tech sector around the Ottawa region. Throughout Ontario there are hundreds of examples of success stories of businesses attracting skilled workers from around the world due to the economic policies of this government, which your party has objected to at every step of the way.

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. Phase two of the Drive Clean program is about to start in my riding of Kitchener Centre. You may or may not be aware, but my wife, my daughter and I are all asthmatics, so we have very great concern with the quality of air in Kitchener Centre. Two years ago, Kitchener, and Waterloo region for that matter, were considered to have had the poorest air quality in all of Canada.

One of the worst things I can see when I'm driving along the highways is the blue exhaust coming out of somebody else's car. There has been much criticism that the Drive Clean program doesn't go far enough in the elimination of air pollution. I wonder if you could share with the House what the constituents in Kitchener Centre can expect from your Drive Clean program in the next couple of weeks or months.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I appreciate that the member for Kitchener Centre recognizes the importance of the program and its benefits

to the air that we all breathe. I say to the member from Kitchener Centre that your affected constituents can expect to receive a Drive Clean notice about 90 days prior to their vehicle registration renewal date. Their first step is to choose an accredited Drive Clean facility and to make an appointment. If their vehicle is properly maintained and tuned, they will most likely pass the test, which takes about 20 minutes and costs about \$30.

Before the test, there are a few things they can check on their vehicles. First, they can check the gas tank cap to ensure that it's not broken, faulty or missing; they can check for holes in the exhaust system or the catalytic converter; they can check for major fluid leaks—they can check for the leakage of oil, water or antifreeze; they can check for any damage from worn tires or visible smoke coming from the vehicle.

Phase two will now encompass 13 new urban areas. They are Peterborough, Barrie, Guelph, Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Mr Wettlaufer: Minister, I'm glad to hear the response, but you didn't explain what the measurable reduction in smog is going to be. It's common knowledge that the opposition parties, who have been very critical of the Drive Clean program, did have an opportunity to bring one in themselves, but they never did. Unlike them, who talk the talk, I want you to demonstrate that our government is walking the walk and that our government is concerned about the pollution problem. I believe it's serious; I believe we're serious about taking care of the air we breathe and ensuring that it's safe and clean, but I'd like your assurance that this is actually taking place.

Hon Mr Newman: I want to thank my colleague from Kitchener Centre once again for another outstanding question. In 1999, the Drive Clean program tested one million vehicles and cut smog emissions by 7%. When fully implemented, Ontario's Drive Clean program will cut smog-causing pollutants from vehicles by up to 22% within the program area. On top of that, driving clean can save you up to 10% in annual fuel consumption and actually prolong the life of your vehicle. Most importantly, Drive Clean is improving the quality of the air that we breathe.

I'd also like to point out to members of the House today that results of a recent poll in the GTA and Hamilton-Wentworth region indicate that 80% of those polled supported the Drive Clean program here in this province. The Drive Clean program is one of the cornerstones of our commitment to clean air and is fully supported by Ontarians across our province.

MARRIAGE

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question today is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. The subject matter of my question is love, and more precisely, the question is with respect to this government's position that would deny me, as a gay man, the right to ask perhaps the most im-

portant question anyone could ask of someone that they love. As you well know, the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto has made clear their intention to send to the registrar of Ontario information about at least two couples in the new year who would like to get married.

I would like to ask you, Minister, in this day and age, do you see it as appropriate that government would seek to limit the opportunities for people of the same sex to affirm their love and commitment to another human being?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I've indicated over the past few days that this is not an issue that falls within the jurisdiction of the provincial government. This is clearly a federal matter and the responsibility is clearly defined through the Constitution of the country, as well as federal legislation. The federal government has defined a marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

Under the Ontario legislation, the Marriage Act, our role is to identify those individuals who can legally perform a marriage, whether they be a minister of a recognized religious organization, a justice of the peace, a provincial judge or a number of individuals and professions who have the carriage of that responsibility. We have no role in terms of determining who may marry.

1520

Mr Smitherman: Minister, you've noted that Ontario's registrar will not sanctify these marriages, citing her interpretation of a federal law and the Constitution, which you have repeated today. But as you are aware, section 5 of the Ontario Marriage Act states, "Any person who is of the age of majority may obtain a licence or be married under the ... publication of banns." It would seem that provincial law does accept same-sex marriages, and clearly this issue is headed toward the courts.

Therefore, Minister, I would ask you, will you commit today that your government will not actively engage in pursuing a legal interpretation that excludes same-sex couples from making the most significant commitment of their love to one another? Will you commit today not to work actively against this evolution?

Hon Mr Runciman: We're obligated to comply with the laws of this country, and the laws clearly spell out what is right and what is wrong in the eyes of the federal government, in the eyes of federal legislation. If the honourable member reads the Marriage Act, it clearly indicates our obligation to comply with respect to the laws of the land, and that's what we're doing.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. My concern is that with a province as large and diverse as Ontario, we need a balanced approach to the training and recruitment of medical students to fill the needs in underserved areas like for instance my riding of Durham. I understand that it was our government that commissioned the McKendry report.

Some sectors believe that the pool of potential medical students is shrinking. Some would suggest it's shrinking due to the changing demographics in society today. I'm asking the minister, what action has the government taken to help resolve this critical issue facing many communities in Ontario today?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank my colleague from Durham. He's absolutely correct. This government is fully committed to providing balance at our medical schools for many reasons: I think the citizens of this province recognize the importance of having representatives from all walks of life; need; all geographical corners of the province; and young people aspiring. We want to encourage everyone who's qualified to be accepted as far as possible in our medical schools. We've taken the advice of proposals such as the McKendry report and acted swiftly to encourage greater participation from our rural students.

In July of this year, the Ministry of Health announced that medical school students will be entitled to receive up to \$10,000 for each year of undergraduate medical training as part of—and I'll say this so everyone can hear it—the tuition grant program and location incentives fund.

We are very interested in having young people from all walks of life and all corners of Ontario apply to our medical schools, and we are making many opportunities available to them so they'll have the financial support they need.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for permission to now call third reading of Bill 2, An Act to amend the Medicine Act, and that the question on third reading be immediately put without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

MEDICINE AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MÉDECINS

Mr Kwinter moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 2, An Act to amend the Medicine Act, 1991 /
Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les médecins.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be named as in the title.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): This is a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;

"Whereas a recently released Oracle research poll confirms that 92% of Ontarians support equal health travel funding;

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province; and

"Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Loughheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

As a southerner, I'm in full agreement and I have affixed my signature to this petition.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to be used on vintage automobiles."

I appreciate that this bill was considered this morning. However, I want to clear my desk of surplus petitions on behalf of Mr O'Toole and Mr Parker. I'm pleased to affix my signature to these petitions.

SINGING OF NATIONAL ANTHEM

1530

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): This is addressed to the Legislature of Ontario to allow for the singing of O Canada in the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas this wonderful country Canada has a national anthem we should be proud to sing; and

"Whereas the national anthem is sung in our schools, stadiums, and numerous public assemblies; and

"Whereas the MPPs of the Ontario Legislature should be doing everything they can to promote this great country and its customs and traditions; and

"Whereas the singing of the national anthem will be a reminder to all MPPs and members of the public that we should not hesitate to use every opportunity to sing the praises of our great country, Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario allow the singing of O Canada by MPPs in the provincial Legislature."

I'm in agreement with the singing of O Canada in our Legislature. I don't know why Mike Harris doesn't allow it. I'm going to sign my name to it.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have further petitions from UAW local 251 in Wallaceburg.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances known as carcinogens; and

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens; and

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances; and

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer; and

"That the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

I'm very proud to present this petition Allison Stark, one of our pages here, a fine Hamiltonian who's done an outstanding job and I'm really proud to have her here with me in the Legislature. Thanks so much, Allison.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to the United States to receive medical attention;

"Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as macular degeneration, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are not covered by OHIP;

"Whereas many residents of St Catharines and other communities in Ontario are unable to find a family doctor, as a result of the growing doctor shortage we have experienced during the tenure of the Harris government;

"Whereas many assistive devices that could aid patients in Ontario are not eligible for funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health;

"Whereas community care access centres have inadequate funding to carry out their responsibilities for long-term and home care; and

"Whereas the Harris government has now spent over \$185 million on blatantly partisan government advertising in the form of glossy brochures and television and radio ads:

"We, the undersigned call upon the Conservative government of Mike Harris to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising and to invest this money instead into health care in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed in this petition, which I am giving to Katherine.

SINGING OF NATIONAL ANTHEM

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It's my pleasure again to stand up for my country and ask that this petition be presented to the Legislature to allow for the singing of our national anthem, O Canada, in this Ontario Legislature. This is from a group of senior citizens in the city of Toronto.

"To the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas this wonderful country, Canada, has a national anthem we should be proud to sing; and

"Whereas the national anthem is sung in our schools, stadiums and numerous public assemblies; and

"Whereas the MPPs of the Ontario Legislature should be doing everything they can to promote this great country and its customs; and

"Whereas the singing of the national anthem will be a reminder to all MPPs and members of the public that we should not hesitate to use every opportunity to sing the praises of our great country, Canada;

"We, the undersigned petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario allow the singing of O Canada by the MPPs in the provincial Legislature."

I support the singing of O Canada in this Legislature, I don't know why the government doesn't allow it, and I will affix my name to it.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition with respect to allowing year of manufacture licence plates on historic vehicles, a bill that was referred for third reading today.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to be used on vintage automobiles."

I appreciate the opportunity to present this petition.

SINGING OF NATIONAL ANTHEM

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario concerning the singing of O Canada in the Ontario Legislature. It reads as follows:

"To the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas this wonderful country, Canada, has a national anthem we should be proud to sing; and

"Whereas the national anthem is sung in our schools, stadiums and numerous public assemblies; and

"Whereas the MPPs of the Ontario Legislature should be doing everything they can to promote this great country and its customs; and

"Whereas the singing of the national anthem will be a reminder to all MPPs and members of the public that we should not hesitate to use every opportunity to sing the praises of our great country, Canada; and

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario allow the singing of O Canada by the MPPs in the provincial Legislature."

Because I believe so strongly in what's written there, I have affixed my name to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BALANCED BUDGETS FOR BRIGHTER FUTURES ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR DES BUDGETS ÉQUILIBRÉS POUR UN AVENIR MEILLEUR

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 12, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 152, An Act to implement the 2000 Budget to establish a made-in-Ontario tax system and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 2000 en vue de créer un régime fiscal propre à l'Ontario et à modifier diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): The member for Hamilton West.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I appreciate the opportunity to finish my leadoff remarks on this budget bill.

I said at the conclusion of my remarks, I believe on Tuesday, that what I wanted to do with my remaining time—given that this budget spells out the government's economic plan, part 2 of their implementation of the recent budget, which we know showed that over the next couple of years upwards of \$4 billion will be given as tax gifts to corporations, many of which are making record levels of profit, as well as to individuals who have done very well by the economic boom and who in our society least need any kind of tax gift at this time.

What I want to talk about today is how we in the NDP view the kind of Ontario this builds. I said the other day that a lot of the problems that exist right now, which we bring during question period and during comments like this, are papered over as a result of the boom, which is so strong, particularly in the auto industry, which is our main economic engine here in Ontario. With the economy going the way it has in the United States, the demand for the autos and the parts we produce here has gone through the roof. So the direct and indirect jobs that are in the Ontario economy are so great that no matter what this government or any other government did, this economy would have roared along.

The question I want to pose in my remarks today is, what happens when the music stops, when the booming economy is no longer there to make money available and create jobs, which in our opinion covers up a lot of the major damage this government has done to the infrastructure of our province, those things that have contributed in a major way to our being chosen a number of times by the United Nations as the greatest country in the world to live in. Being the strongest and largest province in this Confederation means we had a lot to do with that, and we're all very proud that many of those foundations have given us that distinction. Who isn't proud to be in a country where the United Nations keeps saying time and time again, "That's the best country in the world"? But the very things that built that reputation

and that quality of life are what have been under sustained attack by this government for over five years.

There are indicators that in the next 12 months we're going to see a significant downturn; at the very least, a slowing down. Having said that, no one can predict with any kind of certainty when it will happen. I don't think anyone challenges the fact that it is going to happen. The natural business cycle means there will be at least a slowdown, and possibly more than a slowdown. We may easily slip into a recession.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Some of the backbenchers who know everything about everything say, "That could never happen." Well, Mr Hastings, we'll make sure you're noted as one of those here, and we'll check back that you were the one who said, "It couldn't happen, not in Tory Ontario. We're recession-proof."

The fact is, most of us who are living on planet Earth recognize there will be an economic downturn. To what degree, we don't know, but the more severe it is, the deeper that—

1540

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Over the last few weeks a habit has been occurring in this House of referring to members by their names, and we have it again today. I thought the rule was that you refer to members by whatever riding they represent, but it would appear you can do anything in this House. Could we at least get back to that fundamental, if it's not too much? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: That is the standing order, and I would expect that all members live up to that. That order reaches not just one side of the House, and I remind people that it's still in effect.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker, and I apologize to the member from Bedrock.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: I withdraw, John. Sit down.

Mr Hastings: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: First, let me apologize for my comments about the recession, which we never said. But on the point of order, I'm the member for Etobicoke North. I have never once, in six years, referred to the member for Hamilton West as the member from somewhere else. So can we at least have that? I know it's asking too much.

The Acting Speaker: I believe the member had already withdrawn that comment, but if he would do it again, it would be appreciated.

Mr Christopherson: I don't want to make it a habit. I did withdraw it already.

The fact of the matter is, there will be a recession and, if we take a look, there's a real possibility that it's going to happen sooner than later.

Earlier I raised the issue of the auto industry, because it's the most public and identifiable signal we see right now. We know that DaimlerChrysler is slowing down production. There is some speculation that there will be other layoffs. Certainly General Motors made a major announcement the other day that could have significant

implications for us. For a slowdown in the auto industry to do the kind of damage that would create serious trouble in Ontario, it doesn't need to be a direct announcement about layoffs within the Ontario auto industry. Any part of the North American auto industry that starts to slip into a slump in a major way, in terms of layoffs and a reduction in production, will have a ripple effect right across. Given its huge significance to us, it is not at all unlikely that some time soon we're going to begin to see the effects of that.

We need to also keep in mind that energy prices have gone through the roof. As members of this House know, it takes a number of months—usually six to eight months—for a change in the price of crude oil to work its way through the entire system, all the way downstream to the point where the consumer pulls up to the pump or we turn on the heat in our homes. There has been such a dramatic increase. I would suggest that the last time there was this dramatic an increase takes us back to the 1970s. We saw the inflationary pressures that placed on our economy and we also saw what happened to our economy in the 1970s. Much of our day-to-day life, as well as the foundations of planning a business budget, changed forever overnight. Whether this will be as dramatic an impact remains to be seen, but it's there. It's on the Richter scale. We're just now beginning to feel it, and unfortunately we're beginning to feel it in Ontario at a time when people start to increase the amount of energy they use to heat their homes during our cold winters.

But it goes further than that. There are the implications of the trucking industry. My brother Mark is a broker for Loomis, and these costs have a direct impact on him as an independent business person. Therefore this is going to affect his profit, his bottom line, and therefore the quality and standard of living he is able to provide for his family. He's going to get hit both ways: on the business and in terms of his use as a personal consumer. There's also, obviously, going to be an impact on every mode of transportation and every mode of physical production in the province. I could go on and talk about some of the high-tech firms that are beginning to announce layoffs or capital investments that are not beginning to happen.

I raise all of these things to point out that it isn't just a case of spending time on my feet fearmongering. There are reasons that everyone is looking at to suspect that the economy is going to slow down in the next year and, as much as respective finance ministers want to say and do say that we'll get a soft landing, meaning that we won't feel the impact as much as a hard landing, there's no certainty to these things, no certainty at all.

I can remember the projections that Floyd Laughren as Minister of Finance and I as his parliamentary assistant received from both the in-house economists here within the ministry as well as private external economists telling us that the economy was in a slump, Canada was in deeper and longer as a result of Brian Mulroney's real high interest rates. The difference between the interest rates that we were charging and the actual rate of inflation was much higher than it was in the United States.

and, quite frankly, practically around the world. That meant that Canada, along with the high dollar, was heading into a deeper, longer recession than other economies that we were compared to.

When we assumed office in 1990, we were told it was going to be a very severe recession, straight down, but that it would be short and then there would be a slow climb out over the last two to three years of our term. I should say that we were told consistently from the time we went in that it was going to be a very sharp decline for a very short period of time and then a slow climb out. That's not what happened.

What happened was, yes, we went into the very sharp decline in a short period of time, only we stayed there; in fact, it went a little deeper. We had the economic forecasts tested to see whose advice we were following that was leading us astray so we could change it, and it turned out that the economists within the ministry as well as economists in the private sector were all predicting the same thing. If you take a look at the advice we received and the policies we had versus the way things turned out, against the advice and speculation of the experts at the time, recognizing it's an inexact science, if anyone ever bothered to do that, you would have a lot better understanding of exactly why we did the things we did.

Is that to say we didn't make mistakes? No. That would be foolish. But the notion that somehow we were so off the mark that just by the fact that you own an NDP membership card, you cannot possibly manage the economy is simply not the case, and it doesn't hold up to the facts. I urge anyone who is interested in that and maybe even challenging me on it to take a look at the advice that we were given and the actions we took based upon that advice and then, when the reality became different, what we did to try to adjust and compensate for that changed scenario.

Having said all of that, I want to point out that for a lot of people, the notion of poverty and the minimum wage and the fact that there isn't any kind of housing policy, either at the provincial or the federal level—and I would remind people that the federal Liberals are the first government in Canada for the last 40 years that doesn't have a housing policy. This is one of those times that the Tories can't chime in and cheer and pound their desks and say, "Way to go, Dave. Go after those Liberals," because they don't either. In fact, the last government in North America that had a social housing policy, with real plans and real money creating real homes was the NDP. We have right now a total absence of leadership and responsibility for housing that can't be sustained. But that is our reality right now.

1550

In addition, look at what this government has done vis-à-vis the health care system, the education system, environmental protection, social services and the impact of downloading on municipalities. Take all of those things and say what does the world look like for the average person who really maybe hasn't paid too much attention to these issues. They care, but it isn't the main

thing they think about all day, because it doesn't reflect their life and it doesn't reflect maybe their neighbourhood and their families and their friends and co-workers. That's wonderful were it such that no one had to live a life that was different than that. But they do, a lot of them.

What happens to somebody who right now doesn't think a lot about this, but finds themselves, halfway through or two thirds of the way through next year, being on the short end of the recession? You won't have all that money and the fact that you haven't had pressure on the welfare system because there has been job growth, pressure on housing to the degree that I'm going to suggest will happen when we get into a recessionary situation, all the pressures that are added on a health care system during a recessionary time, on our education system as they try to pick up pieces of the quality of life of children that maybe they aren't able to provide at home any longer.

There are whole ranges of things that change. Everything about the province will change. If you're one of those who has a job today and everything's fine and you've got enough disposable income and you've benefited from the Harris tax cuts and you survive the next recession and nothing changes for you, then you are very, very fortunate, very blessed, and I guess the most we can ask for is that you please remember there are others who aren't that fortunate, who aren't living that way. But you won't be touched.

But if we get into a recession, some folks who are watching now or at home or at work and not thinking about the possibility of being in these statistics are going to be. Those are real people. When you see layoffs coming, those are real people who are connected to real families, and they're going to be impacted in a real way.

Let's just take a scenario where you've got someone who has been working 25 years at the same place. They've been very fortunate. They've got a good union, meaning they've got good benefits for their children: a dental plan, insurance plan, all those things that Tories don't think working people ought to have. If you did, the very least you'd do is raise the minimum wage. Don't tell me you care about the quality of life of working people. It just doesn't wash.

Let's say you're one of those fortunate folks who have a good collective agreement and you've been able to share in the benefits of increased productivity and the fact that there has been money made, profits made at this corporation and you've gotten at least a piece of that. You find yourself in your mid-50s, you've still got children in school, maybe one in university, but you've still got major responsibilities, and you're laid off. Whether you're a GM worker, DaimlerChrysler, Stelco, Dofasco, Camco or one of the new tech industries, you're out; you're out of work.

The first thing that happens is you apply for EI. It's now called EI. You apply for EI and you know what? The odds are against your getting it. Whereas in the not-too-distant past, the majority of workers were covered by

what was then called UI, as of 1997, only 25% of people who work for a living qualify for EI, one quarter. That means three quarters, 75% of all the people who are working in Ontario would not be eligible for EI if they were permanently laid off. If you are fortunate enough to qualify for EI, you're going to see a sharp decrease in your standard of living and you're going to hope it is only temporary. If it is, wonderful. You're very fortunate. If not, or if you didn't qualify for EI, you're probably going to live on your savings as long as you can and maybe start cashing in some RRSPs.

Do you know where the next stop is if we are in the middle of a recession and everywhere around you're seeing layoffs and you've got younger people coming out of university and college also competing for the same limited jobs that are out there, those scarce jobs, many of them part-time, that don't provide the same benefits, which is going to be a huge problem for the same example person I've used? I'll tell you what: after you've run out of things to sell and the family heirlooms are gone and you've used up every bit of discretionary money you have and cancelled any future plans you might have had, if you're still out of money and haven't been able to find a job to replace the one you had, you've got one choice. You'll have to go on welfare.

Pride can only take you so far. When your children need new shoes, when your son or daughter in college or university has to pay their residence bill and their food bill and their tuition bill and you've got mortgage payments and because you weren't able to buy the new car and are trying to keep an older car on the road, you've got maintenance bills and your insurance bill has come in—you've got all these pressures—at some point, if you don't have a source of income, you've got to go to welfare.

Let me tell you, the world changes big time. It always did, but how different it is now. Even if it's short-term, here's the world you're in. If you've got a family cottage, you'd better sell it. Not better, have to. You've got to sell that cottage, otherwise you don't qualify. The fact you say, "I just need a little help for a while"—too bad. Remember when Mike Harris talked about drug testing those people. Guess what? You are those people. How do you like that world?

If you own a home and you've been on welfare for a year, to continue on welfare the state will put a lien on your home. In effect, you're no longer really receiving assistance. You're actually living off the value of your home. After the lien is placed, you've got to pay it back at some point.

Again, one of the points in raising all this is to try to jar even a few people to the awareness that there is no "us" and "them." In my opinion, that's artificially constructed by the government, and it has been done by other governments—"us" and "them." As long as it's "them," they deserve that. They use the very small percentage of people who abuse the system as a reason and an example of why they had to step in and do what they did.

It's funny, they never seem to feel the same about people who cheat on their income tax or who have

fraudulently squandered millions of dollars of little old widows who have lost all the money they ever had in the world. You don't seem to take the same attitude toward those kinds of lawbreakers. We know what you do. You go after the visceral emotion. People understand that. Unfortunately, a lot of people succumb to the enticement that you can believe there are different categories of human beings in our society.

I don't think I mentioned yet: welcome to drug testing. So much for your dignity. So much for the sanctity of the self. So much for privacy.

1600

That's the world you are now in, and what's going on around you? Let's take a look at our health care system and let's remember that the examples I'm giving now are where we are today with our hospitals. There is an increase during a recession, for a whole host of reasons in the demands on health services. We've got jammed ERs. We've got underfunding of ambulances, which the auditor has said are not responding in the expected time periods because they don't have enough money. So much of this comes back to money and, by the way, there was \$4 billion to give away to those who didn't need it. Let's keep that in mind as I mention these things—record levels of ambulances on redirect that are being told "Sorry, don't even bother stopping at our emergency room. You'd better keep on moving because we're backed up and we can't take another single person. We've already seen an inquest into someone who died.

We've got a major, critical shortage of nurses, and when you're in the hospital, take a look at those nurses. They are so stressed. We've got a doctor shortage on top of all that, and that's not even speaking to the very specific, even worse situation that exists in northern Ontario in communities like yours, Speaker, of Sault Ste. Marie in terms of the particular health issues they have around doctors and medical services and provision of supports for cancer patients—special, unique problems that our northern citizens have, and I'm not even focusing on those. There's the health world, as you sit there looking for some kind of better future, some hope for what kind of a positive world maybe your children could grow into.

Hospital deficits are ballooning, and either this government finds the money to make up those deficits or there are going to be even further cuts to our hospitals. Again, I haven't even gotten into the whole issue of the lack of funding for community health care which supposedly was to offset the institutional health care that we're losing because we're downsizing hospitals. Remember that plan: downsize the hospitals because institutional care is not as good nor as efficient as community care, so you take the majority of the money you save from downsizing hospitals and put it into community health care? It didn't happen. Downsize the hospitals, don't put it into the community services—even your own commission told you that was the key ingredient—and what do you get? Exactly what I've described, only now we're in a recessionary period and

this government you can bet is going to start to say, "You know, it's different now." They didn't have any money when times were good, at least not enough money, but now the argument is going to be, "We're in tough times. We're going to tighten that old belt, so we can't afford to transfer any more money to hospitals." Every issue I've raised here right now will be exacerbated during a recession because the government will use that as their reason to cut off whatever limited money they are spending in health care.

So there for that ordinary middle-class worker is the world they see in health care, and if they've got a sick child at home with any kind of chronic illness, this is going to loom large. We all know what happens to the minds of people when they're out of work long enough and despair and despondency start to set in. Don't think this won't play a role when it's on the news, on the radio, on the front page of the newspaper every day.

Then you take a look around you and say, "Maybe I should at least go outside and get a breath of fresh air and that will help me feel a little better." Of course we know that smog is a growing threat to the very lives of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Ontarians. Certainly the studies are showing us what smog is doing to children who have asthma. I think one of the Tory members mentioned today—I believe he was referring to himself and someone else in his family as being asthmatic—he is very much affected, as are seniors. If things continue, it won't be long before what would otherwise be called a luckily normal, able-bodied, healthy person won't have the immune system to withstand the damage that smog is going to do.

And don't expect to take a stroll down to the local beach and go for a dip, because how many local beaches are being closed because it's unsafe to swim in the water? Need I say anything more than "Walkerton" about water?

How did we get there? I'm not talking about the dark days of the recession. These are the boom times. The boom times had us see in this budget, the very budget we're debating today, that they cut almost 18% from the Ministry of Natural Resources and they cut 9% from the Ministry of the Environment. In this budget they cut all that money, billions, literally. It sounds like a McDonald's advertisement—billions of dollars given to the very wealthiest people and corporations in Ontario. The Ministry of Natural Resources gets cut 18% and the Ministry of the Environment gets cut 9%. Over the last almost six years the staff are down 40%. I raised all these environmental issues.

You would think, with billions of dollars in surplus available, in the biggest economic boom we've ever seen in North America, there would at least be a few bucks to deal with some of these issues. No. They cut those ministry budgets and we've lost 40 staff—pardon me; were it only 40—40% of the staff have been cut. Get this: the combined operating and capital budgets of the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources—wait for it. Billions to give away to the

wealthiest, cuts to the two ministries that protect our land, water and air—\$100 million cut, taken away. Never mind where's the common sense; I ask, where's the sanity?

The auditor has started commenting about this. I should recognize they've been mentioning it. The Environmental Commissioner—you could argue he's the environmental auditor—has been mentioning it for very many years. But even the general auditor, the Provincial Auditor, has been pointing out that the government has cut enforcement staff. Get this: enforcement staff. We keep saying they're taking care of their corporate friends and they give us rhetoric in response. I'm not going to give you rhetoric. You have cut enforcement staff by 25% and inspections have declined by one third. You would think, if you cared about the health of the people and our environment, that you'd be increasing those areas, wouldn't you? That's not what happened. That's not what's happening.

That laid-off auto worker has seen the crisis around them in health care getting worse and they've got a young child who has a chronic health care problem, and now they look around at the environment and they can't even rely on the fact that the air they breathe is going to be safe, let alone the water when they turn on the tap. But it's OK because, according to these folks over here, the only thing that matters is that the very wealthy are getting very much wealthier, and so everything should be OK, except if you're not wealthy and you're in the situation I just raised. You go through your mail—you don't want the mail that has those little windows in them, don't want any more bills—but then you start reading and hearing about what's going to happen to property taxes. You're barely somehow keeping your mortgage payments going—even then at the point that I'm describing in that kind of story, they're probably behind in their mortgage payments and are having to find a way to try to save their home—and you're being told you could face anywhere from a 10% to 30% or 40% increase in your property taxes as a result of reassessment, never mind adding in the downloading. This speaks very directly to quality of life. Municipalities have been handed so much responsibility and not given the money.

For those government members who want to argue the point, I remind them that Tony Skarica, a former Tory MPP, voted against this government's bill because it wasn't revenue-neutral.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): A former MPP.
1610

Mr Christopherson: OK, so a former MPP. What's your point? In fact, I would say to you that emphasizes my point because it's probably one of the most principled things I've ever seen done since I've been in politics. I give the guy full marks. He had the guts to put his vote and his voice and ultimately his seat on the line for what he believed in. So I would suggest that any kind of derision you meant by saying "former" is very ill placed. You would do well to use him as a role model.

My time is rapidly expiring, but there are a few more things I do want to mention. You've got to appreciate that the pressure on municipalities right now is incredible, and you know what? It doesn't really matter what philosophical base you start from, who wants to be the one that chooses between public transit—which is a huge issue for people of modest income and seniors and students; a lot of students go to McMaster University in my riding and Mohawk College—or ambulances, or public health, social housing, women's shelters or GO Transit? Who wants to make those decisions, and at a time when the only roar one hears is, or almost the only roar, "Tax cuts, tax cuts, we're going to have tax cuts"? In that climate I feel, really, for all municipal councillors trying to grapple with this impossible situation.

You know, if the individual I just mentioned and their family ultimately end up in poverty, they will join the largest group of Ontarians ever to be in poverty, and to be deeper in poverty than in the history of our province. In fact, there are only two provinces since 1996 that have seen an increase in their poverty rates. Why? Because of the economic boom. That's why it's news. What are the two provinces? One is Newfoundland and, to be fair, they've got a lot of challenges during good times, bad times; they're there all the time. So to some degree I don't think you'd hold them to the same test. But here in Ontario? There are more people in deeper poverty than we've ever had before during the biggest economic boom. How can that be? How can it be that there are more people in poverty and more middle-class people looking at poverty and seeing—you know what?—it's only one job away. During a time when this economy is so strong, you've got billions of dollars of surplus and you give it away to the wealthy. How can that be? How can it be in this Ontario that there are children who don't have adequate child care or don't have access to the health care they're entitled to or don't have access to the education system they're entitled to? I don't have time to talk about the litany of things you have done to our education system and to our teachers.

These are the realities that family is facing, and these are the good times. What's going to happen to these people in the bad times? For some people, part-time work is all they're going to find. You've done nothing about that in your latest changes to the Employment Standards Act. You haven't introduced any kind of prorating of dental care, health insurance, life insurance—all the things that normally one is entitled to because of full-time employment. You've done nothing for part-time. You've certainly done nothing for the working poor who are earning minimum wage, and if you're not earning the minimum wage, if you are earning a couple of bucks more, it's very difficult for you to keep getting raises when the standard post that's used is the minimum wage and it's not moving.

So if you are fortunate enough to find some kind of a job, you've got a whole new world. I keep talking about the new world that we have in the environment, social services, health and education. Take a look at the new

working world thanks to Mike Harris and Chris Stockwell. Thanks to the new changes under the Employment Standards Act, a whole lot of rights you thought you had, like being at home with your family from time to time, are gone. That's the world that you suggest you have adequately prepared us for.

Had we spent those billions of dollars on investing in our environmental protection, investing in our health care system, investing in our children through the education system, both post-secondary and at the elementary level, we would have a very different Ontario. Instead, yes, it's a different Ontario, but oh, it's such a sadder, sadder one than it needs to be.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I listened with interest both this day and the night before last to the previous speaker, the member for Hamilton West, and I'm privileged to have an opportunity to comment upon his remarks.

I acknowledge at the outset that there is more to do in this province, that there are some who have not benefited as much as we would like and as much as they would like from the economic boom that has helped so many across this province, but I think my friend opposite in the NDP overstates his case by a significant degree. If one were to have just arrived in this province, turned on the TV and watched the member opposite talk about this province, they would have envisioned a Third World nation. With the greatest respect, that is not what we have here.

What we have here is a thriving economy. What we have here is an employment growth rate that since 1995 is 15.5%. My friend attributes that, as do the Liberals opposite on many occasions, to the fact that there is a boom in the United States and that we're being dragged along by that success. But of course, if one compares the employment growth rate in Michigan, as an example, at 7.4% over the same period, one realizes that ours is twice that much. If one compares what is going on in Ohio, another border state, over the same period of time—their growth rate is 6.7%, again compared to our 15.5% employment growth rate—one realizes that there is something very positive and very different going on in this province.

I know that my friend has an obligation, as an opposition member, to preach gloom and doom, and as I said at the outset, I acknowledge that there is more to do, but to describe this economy in the year 2000 and the society in the way that he has frankly is somewhat misleading.

The Acting Speaker: That last comment was out of order. It's not parliamentary to accuse somebody of misleading the House.

Mr Young: Withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker: Further comments or questions?

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): It's a pleasure to stand and offer some comments on the remarks by the member for Hamilton West. I think the characterization by the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance that the role of opposition parties is

to preach doom and gloom is a little bit off the mark. The member, who was a minister in a past government, did an excellent job of making his case with respect to what's going on in the province of Ontario. I'm one of those who happen to be proud that Ontario is enjoying good economic times. Many people, friends of mine and family, are experiencing that, and I celebrate that along with all Ontarians and indeed all Canadians. I think that's an accomplishment we all ought to share some responsibility for.

I would say, though, that I think there's one area, and the member touched on this, where the government is missing an opportunity, and that is in terms of living up to its responsibilities to make the necessary investments to ensure that we have economic growth and quality of life which are sustainable.

1620

From the standpoint of a member who represents a riding in Toronto and who is the critic for the Liberal Party for the greater Toronto area, I believe you don't need to look very far to see the decline of quality of life that is occurring for the constituents of the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. I know that in his remarks he'll want to talk about the fact that many of the constituents he represents are experiencing extraordinary challenges getting to and from work—and that's impacting their family life—because gridlock has occurred.

The city of Toronto is facing some extraordinary pressures around reinvestments that are required in its municipal transit system. The province is no longer a partner in those arrangements. That will be a burden on the taxpayers of Toronto.

Many people in my constituency continue to suffer from policies which do not contribute to the creation of affordable housing. The government has yet to address the reality which is that some people cannot afford to pay market price for their housing.

Mr Gill: It is a pleasure to take part in this debate. The members from Hamilton West, from Willowdale and from Toronto Centre-Rosedale spoke. A couple of things: the member from Willowdale mentioned that it appears to be that the opposition is only naysaying. I've not heard one positive thing from them—surely to God, when we have 800,000 more jobs created, that is not to say that the government has been attacking the poor for the last five years. It has been the last five years that the economy turned around. I did say it was very difficult to turn around. It is like a big ship. But eventually and slowly, we have turned around.

They talk about doom and gloom and recession. When the NDP was here from 1990 to 1995, there was a recession all over the world pretty well, especially in North America. But their financial policies were totally wrong. I was not in politics then, but I do remember somewhere reading that they were going to spend their way out of recession. You can't do that. You can't spend your way out of recession. You can't spend to create jobs. You can cut taxes to create jobs. We've had that example—800,000. In fact, more than 200,000 have been

created since 1999, when we came into our second mandate.

The NDP speakers normally say, "It is because of the US economy. That's why we are benefiting," forgetting to say that we are benefiting from the astronomical growth that this province is enjoying because of the hard work of our government.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I listened to my friend the member from Hamilton West with great interest. Even though I was out in the members' lobby for a few moments, I listened in out there as well, on the monitor. I would like to suggest that he made some very interesting and enlightening points with respect to possible downturns and recessions that have occurred in this province. Certainly, the most severe downturn that we witnessed was the 1990-91 recession, which some people called a depression, in this province.

Frankly, I would say that his advice as to what this government is perceiving to be good times and how the people of this province must prepare themselves for an eventual downturn in the economy is good advice. It is important to remember that the economy cannot continue to grow forever without seeing some setback. I also believe that it is important for this government to recognize that its forecasts are incredibly rosy in their outlook. I think they are overestimating future growth.

These, along with the prescriptions in the budget for positive changes the government likes to say it is making, possibly could lead us into a very difficult time in the future if we should happen to experience a downturn in the economy. There are no protections in the fiscal plan the government has put forward for that eventuality. So I'd like to commend the member for making those comments.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Response?

Mr Christopherson: I want to thank the members who took the time and effort to respond to my remarks. Let me deal with at least a bit of a response to all that was said. The member for BGMS—he said we could say that, so there you go; I'm not that big a jerk—said it was a big job, that you had to turn the ship around to get the economy right. I would reject that. I would say to you that this thing was like a shuttle on the launching pad, and once the American economy took off, it didn't matter whether you did anything or not, it was going. So I don't think there was this big ship to turn around. The economy was taking off, and quite frankly, had you held off on your tax cuts, we would have balanced the budget sooner in the province of Ontario and escaped all the damage you did.

My colleague from Toronto Centre-Rosedale raised a key issue. That's the problem: you get four hours of material and you have to pack it into a 40-minute speech. This is an important issue that needs to be explored more and really is sort of the end chapter of the speech I gave, which is that at the end of the day you've done nothing about sustainability.

Tax cuts are short-term solutions that do nothing for the long term. Where's the investment in our infra-

structure? Where's the investment in our universities? Where's the investment in our health care? Where's the investment in our environmental protection? In our municipal base? Without those things, you don't have quality of life. That's where the majority of people are impacted.

To my friend from Willowdale, Mr Young, who talked about I was describing us as being a Third World nation, I was saying that the perspective of some folks—I'm not saying that's the way the whole province is, but a growing number of people—do you know what?—are living like it is a Third World nation, and that's unacceptable. It ought not to be. There's enough money to make sure that doesn't happen.

The Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Gill: It is a pleasure once again to stand and join in the debate on Bill 152, the Balanced Budgets for Brighter Futures Act, 2000. Bill 152 is the latest chapter in the government's record of sound fiscal management, lower taxes, more jobs and less red tape. Since the Mike Harris government took power—I've said it before—since June 8, 1995, over 830,000 jobs have been created. That's more jobs than the entire population of the new city of Ottawa. Let's talk about my riding: that's seven times more jobs than the entire population of my riding.

If you ask the people of Ontario, "Are you better off now than you were five years ago?" I know the vast majority, even among the Liberal and NDP supporters, would say yes, they're better off than they were five years ago. We can talk about all the partisan rhetoric, but this is a fact of life. Any of the parties can go out and ask the ordinary citizens and they would concur with the remark I just made. In fact people will have time, an opportunity after the Christmas break, to go and talk to the constituents, and this is exactly what they will hear.

Our economy is on the move again. More people are working. Taxes and red tape are lower. High standards have returned to the schools. Parents now have report cards they can understand and have more direct power over their children's education. I'm sure parents over the last few weeks have been looking at the newspapers and comparing the results of the grade 3 and grade 6 students across Ontario. They've seen the improvement and the stability our system is bringing back to the classroom, because we are going back to the basics, we are going back to the structure, we are going back to the arithmetic and the sciences that are so vital to the growth of our youth, so that they can compete with anybody in the world.

1630

Ontarians now have a government that believes entrepreneurship and initiatives are virtues. We no longer seek the NDP dream of a society that values only equality even if this means everyone living together equally in poverty. Equality means little if there's no prosperity, if the schools and health care are mediocre and if there's no hope for advancement for ourselves and our children.

This government believes that profit in the private sector is a good thing. I've said it before: "profit" is not a

bad word in Ontario. Government should not punish wealth creators but should encourage them and make their lives easier. I'm proud to be part of a government that does what it says it will do. That saying has become a cliché in Ontario, but it has become a cliché because it is true. We have a discussion in the newspapers that perhaps the federal government, which promised certain things in the red book, is already saying, "But you're not reading the fine print. That's not what we said." That has become the track record of the federal government: to change their mind quickly and say, "We never said so"—another example of their boondoggles.

More important to Ontarians, I think, than any other particular law or plan this government has introduced is the fact that Ontarians finally have a government they can trust. That's the catchword: trust. Mr Speaker, I've spoken to many, many parliamentarians over the last year and a half, and I know you were with me in some of those discussions. They have certainly been amazed that our government has actually reduced the number of MPPs. Overall, in different countries, governments have a tendency to keep increasing their size, keep increasing their budgets, keep increasing their numbers. We are the government that has gone ahead and cut our own numbers, from 123 to 103.

I'm proud to say that during that reshuffling my riding was a brand new riding, and I'm very, very proud that the people of BGMS, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, gave me an honour, gave me a chance to represent them. In fact, just yesterday the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale took a cab, and that cab happened to be driven by somebody from my riding. That person—and I've given a name and address because the member took his name and address—was very complimentary of my performance. I'm very happy that he passed on that message to me, and this person will be getting my Christmas card. I can assure you.

I'm proud to be part of a government that does what it says it will do. We are honouring the commitments we made to Ontarians in the 2000 budget. Bill 152 puts in place a number of these specific promises.

This bill introduces a made-in-Ontario tax system, allowing Ontario's government to introduce tax changes that suit our provincial needs, not the whims of a fickle federal government.

R&D, research and development, will be promoted by new tax credits for employees of R&D-intensive companies.

We will introduce corporate tax incentives that support the book publishing, digital media, film and television production industries.

This bill provides for a new educational technology tax incentive to encourage businesses to support Ontario's universities and community colleges in acquiring new teaching equipment and learning technology. Just a few minutes ago, the member opposite said in his remarks that we're not doing anything for the universities. We are going to be spending \$1 billion over the next few

years to go back to the infrastructure, for the buildings, for the bricks and mortar.

We will reduce red tape for small business by allowing more Ontario small businesses to use the short-form corporations tax return and we will extend the right to incorporate to all regulated professionals while maintaining personal professional liability to protect the public interest.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, I am proud to see the government fostering investment in research-oriented businesses by providing labour-sponsored investment fund—LSIF—shareholders with an enhanced tax credit of 20%, up from 15%, so more companies, more funds that are labour-sponsored, will benefit from that.

This bill will, for the first time, allow the government of Ontario to establish its own separate tax rates and brackets. As members know, the present income tax rates are calculated as a percentage of federal income tax and are dependent on the tax rates that the federal government of the day chooses to put into place. If the Liberals in Ottawa choose to hike taxes to pay for their cradle-to-grave guaranteed annual income scheme—this is what I was talking about—then Ontario taxpayers could be pulled right along. A made-in-Ontario tax system will allow this government to make changes based on Ontario's needs. Ontario can protect its tax system from increases by Ottawa, as well as targeting credits, exemptions and deductions to areas that really deserve assistance.

You may ask, why do we need to be protected from Ottawa when the federal government cut taxes in the run-up to the last election? The answer to this is simple. With a four-year majority, the Prime Minister no longer has any incentive to spend the nation's money wisely. It will only be a matter of time before some scheme, such as the guaranteed annual income or another HRDC scandal like a \$1-billion boondoggle, will eat up the federal surplus. I don't trust Ottawa to spend my money wisely, and I know that many members of this House do not either. Wasteful spending is ingrained in Liberals. With no fear of an approaching election, I expect the Liberals will return to their wasteful spending nature, like the ceremonial fountains in Shawinigan, a \$1-billion boondoggle. They said it wasn't quite a boondoggle; it's only \$1 billion.

How do they waste our money? The Liberals in Ottawa are kicking in \$1 million to upgrade the living quarters of 650 monkeys at Health Canada. These are monkeys being used for medical research. This new monkey palace will include comfy hammocks, natural rees and toys for all the Liberal monkeys. There will even be separate facilities for about 150 behaviourally challenged monkeys. Canadians can surely rest better at night knowing that the federal Liberals are reaching out to provide for the needs of the monkey community. I am certain they will vote Liberal, but it is a secret ballot, so we don't know for sure. Let me be clear: I'm not against the monkeys and I'm not against the welfare of the animals, but Liberals have a record of wasting money.

For example, Liberals are also spending a lot of hard-earned taxpayer dollars subsidizing hard-up golf courses in Canada's eastern provinces. Courses that have received over \$1 million in the last few years include the Clovelly Club in St John's Newfoundland, the Confederation Golf Club in Charlottetown, Algonquin in Fredericton, as well as many others that have not quite made it to the \$1-million mark. Don't get me wrong. I like to play golf once in a while, if I ever get time. But why are the taxpayers having to pay to let people play?

Interjection.

Mr Gill: Thank you. I hate to admit my golf score; it's simply outrageous. But I do intend to improve, hopefully. I know there's a new golf course being built in Niagara Falls, along with a new casino, and I hope that at the member's invitation I will be able to go there and have a game with him.

I have listed some of the reasons that Ontario needs to escape from the federal tax system. It's only a matter of time before the Liberal spendathon starts again—"Gliberal," like my colleague would say. We need to get out of their system before they drag us down with them again.

1640

Ontario's approach to finances is much different from Ottawa's. Our plan is to keep taxes low while targeting credits where they are needed. Our government is committed to stimulating research and development in the province. To do this, Bill 152 establishes an Ontario research employee stock option credit. This credit will allow employees of eligible research and development companies an Ontario personal income tax credit on the first \$100,000 of taxable employee benefits and capital gains each year arising from designated stock options. I know this is quite technical, but this is for the benefit of the people, to retain the people and the talent in Canada. This credit is targeted at the most R&D-intensive companies: those that spend at least \$25 million or 10% of their revenue on research and development. Company size doesn't matter. All businesses that meet the minimum would qualify. Ontario is taking this step to ensure that R&D-intensive firms can attract and keep highly skilled and well-educated employees. Ontario is part of a global marketplace, not just of goods and services but of human talent as well. We want to make sure our educated workers, particularly young people, can stay and contribute right here in Ontario.

Our excellent education system, colleges and universities, which Ontarians enjoy and which this government continually works to strengthen, cannot be a way station to a high-paying job in Silicon Valley. It has to be financially worthwhile for Canadians to remain here and for immigrants to want to come here.

I'm proud to say I'm a first-generation immigrant to Canada, like many others, educated here in one of the world's great universities, the University of Toronto. My family, my wife and I, have thrived and prospered in Canada. It is important to me that my children have the opportunity to do even better.

Another proposal to aid high-tech industries to keep their most valuable employees is to exclude from the employer health tax base the stock option benefits of eligible companies. This measure will help companies attract the best employees by letting them offer competitive compensation packages.

To help foster investment in R&D-intensive businesses, this bill increases the tax credit for labour-sponsored investment funds from 15% to 20%. This program will increase the venture capital available to research companies.

Bill 152 proposes a new education technology tax incentive to encourage business to support Ontario's universities and colleges. This incentive goes directly toward helping colleges and universities acquire new equipment and learning technology. Under this program, corporations will receive a tax deduction, and unincorporated businesses a tax credit, on donations and price discounts to Ontario universities.

The government will support Ontario's mining sector by providing a 10-year or \$10-million profit exemption from mining tax for eligible remote mines. A lot of the time the opposition says we are not doing enough for the mining sector or we are not doing enough for the north. This is a specific program to make sure the mining sector thrives and is sustainable. After using its 10 years or \$10-million exemption, the remote mine's profits would be taxed at the very minimum, marginal rate of 5%. This provision would be retroactive to the 1996 budget.

Ontario's cultural industries will also benefit as the government increases tax credits to book publishing, digital media and film and television production industries. Bill 152, if passed, would enhance the Ontario book publishing tax credit by increasing from \$10,000 to \$30,000 the maximum tax credit for each book and by the extension of the credit to the first three books by eligible Canadian authors. That is a specific program for the arts community, for the authors.

The government will introduce a regional bonus for film and television production shot outside of the greater Toronto area. This regional bonus will create new jobs in film and television outside of Toronto and keep Ontario competitive with other provinces and the United States.

The interactive digital media tax credit will be expanded to include limited amounts of marketing and distribution expenses. Small, emerging Ontario companies in this area will benefit, as they will be better able to compete internationally in marketing and distributing their products.

Red tape will be reduced for small businesses by this bill, which will allow more of them to use the short-form corporations tax return. Large sections of the corporations tax return are geared toward larger corporations and are therefore irrelevant.

I know when I talk to a lot of small businesses in my community they find the tax system, the tax return, very cumbersome, and they have to hire tax professionals at great expense. So this short tax form will eliminate that by cutting red tape.

Professionals in Ontario have been asking for this government to increase their opportunity to incorporate, and we have responded. This is a long time coming. I know the doctors are very happy that they can incorporate. The government will be extending incorporation rights to a number of other professional groups as well, including dentists, lawyers, physicians as I said, and accountants. Professionals regulated under public acts will be covered as well as certified general accountants. Other groups that could take advantage of this change include nurses, radiologists, social workers and veterinarians. I'm sure Dr Doug Galt will be very happy about that.

This amendment could encourage valuable professionals to remain in Ontario by providing important tax benefits. Many of our professionals, particularly in the medical field, are in strong demand across North America. We need to encourage them to stay in Ontario, so Bill 152, if passed, will be of great benefit in making sure our young people stay in Canada, stay in Ontario which will benefit all of us.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I was listening to the comments from the member for Bramalea-Gore Malton-Springdale, and you would think that the federal election hadn't taken place. Maybe he has been in a cocoon somewhere, but basically his Reform-Alliance supporters lost. They lost badly. They were wiped of every riding and his own riding, I'm sure, too. I think they won two seats in all of Ontario, so obviously the people of Ontario want something different than the Reform-Alliance-type, know-nothing, trailer-park-type politics. They want balanced government that takes care of people who are in need and also is very supportive of people who are in small business.

I couldn't quite understand why he took off on a tirade against monkeys. I really wonder if there is something the member has against monkeys and what monkey have to do with the budget bill. But he had to take it out against monkeys for some reason.

I should also mention that perhaps the member didn't realize that in this budget bill there's no mention of financing or helping public transportation. I'm sure the people of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale would like to have some decent GO Transit service.

As you know, GO is now only financed on the property tax. GO cannot survive on a property tax base. It is impossible. They need some provincial help so you can have decent GO service so people don't find the crunch in the morning, where they can't get into parking lots because they're already filled up, there are only two or three trains, they can't get to work downtown and they're forced to use their cars. As you know, Bramalea is known for its gridlock. You can't get around Bramalea any more because of all the cars and lack of public transportation.

Maybe that's what the member should be asking the Minister of Finance for. Do your job. Do what other cities and provinces do all over the world. They support public transit, good transit systems like GO. They need

their help. You don't have to spend time attacking monkeys. Talk about GO Transit.

1650

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Raminder, member from Bramalea-Gore, the economy is rolling along so well. Good God, we have so many billions of dollars in our coffers that we decided, as a Conservative government, that we were going to give \$1 billion away. So healthy is our economy that we are going to give \$1 billion away—not a dollar, not a million, not a thousand; one billion. You know how many zeros there are there, right? The one is without zeros and then you add zeros: one billion—200 bucks a pop for those who pay income tax to make them feel good. Why? Because the Premier and the others say “because the economy is good and because it's their money and we want to give them a couple of dollars back.” One billion dollars.

I argue they should have cut the debt with that \$1 billion, reduced the debt of my children and their children. You know how good these Tories are about reducing the debt. But no, “We've got \$1 billion and we just want to give it away because we are magnanimous as a government. It's their money and we want to give it away to them.” A billion bucks. Imagine what one billion bucks could do. Lots. One billion bucks could take care of a whole lot of people in trouble. It could take care of our health care system a little bit because everybody is complaining about it.

Good God, what about education? You've taken billions out. Maybe you could put a couple of dollars back. What about housing those poor people? It's not even poor people; we're talking working poor, the guys who are working who don't have any money and they don't have a place to go. Yet we've got \$5 billion, in addition to the \$1 billion, to give away to the corporate sector. Why? Because it's their money, presumably. But it's your money, good taxpayers, they're giving away. They could have cut the debt and they didn't do it.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I want to let the member opposite know there are nine zeros in a billion. We had to get that message to him. He couldn't calculate it that quickly as he spoke. The ability of the third party to do math is legendary. Their inability to do math is legendary in Ontario.

It's absolutely shocking, when the member, Mr Gill, gives a wonderful speech on the economy, when he tells us about some of the legendary waste of the federal Liberals, that the members opposite turn that prime example of Liberal governmental waste into some kind of debate about monkeys, good or bad. It is shameful. They should join the chorus on this side of the floor and admit that is waste and it should be punished. It should be punished at the polls, in my mind. If you did take a combined vote between the two Conservative parties in the last federal election, in many ridings you'd see the Liberals lose a lot of seats in Ontario and other parts of the country. So the member across shouldn't be so quick to judge.

I again want to congratulate Mr Gill for his excellent speech. By the way, returning \$1 billion taxpayers'

dollars to them is not very much liked by the opposition parties, although guess what? The federal Liberals are going to do the same thing in February of next year. That's right: a direct cheque back to the taxpayers of Ontario because they had a surplus. Now they're going to say it's for home heating costs. Call it what you want; it's a direct cheque from the Liberal Party back to the taxpayers of Ontario because they had a surplus, just like this party did. The greatest form of flattery for us is when the federal Liberals start to imitate our tax cuts and our direct returns to the people of Ontario.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The problem with limiting speeches is that the member didn't have time to speak about the shortage of ophthalmologists in St Catharines and the Niagara region, which I know he would want to have mentioned, and in fact the shortage of doctors throughout the Niagara Peninsula. On almost a daily basis, and I'm sure the other members from the Niagara region would agree, we get telephone calls from people who are desperate to acquire the services of a doctor, either a family physician or a medical specialist. Unfortunately, this government hasn't yet taken the kind of comprehensive action needed to ensure that we have the number of doctors we need in the Niagara region. As I say, they call the constituency office. They believe that somehow the MPP can produce a doctor the next day and we're unable to do so.

Two things have to happen. One is that we must provide financial incentives to have doctors come to our area. I'm not one who believes that you should underpay members of the medical profession. I think medical specialists and general practitioners should be compensated appropriately to encourage them to come to areas outside of Metropolitan Toronto, which has a large number of those doctors.

In terms of the specialists, such as the ophthalmologists and the dermatologists, what is required is that on a temporary basis the government of Ontario lift the ceiling on billing so that these people can continue to serve the people of the Niagara region. In addition to this, of course they must have the best of medical devices and the appropriate prescription drugs to be able to serve people. I think of Visudyne, for instance, for those with macular degeneration. I know if the member had more time he would have discussed that issue.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Hastings: It's interesting listening to the member for St Catharines. You'd think the world revolved around St Catharines.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. It's response time.

Mr Gill: I appreciate everybody who took part in this debate: the members for Eglinton-Lawrence, Trinity-Spadina—I don't see him here—my esteemed colleague from Niagara Falls, Bart Maves, and the member for St Catharines.

A couple of things came up in the discussion. Gridlock was one of the things that was mentioned, along with the progress and the advancement in the economy. There are certain things, inherent difficulties, that come in. People

at home will agree with me that we don't want to go back 10 years when there was a depression or a recession or whatever you call it. People were sitting at home and we were paying people to sit at home. Even though people have some difficulty, they would rather have this difficulty than sit at home collecting unemployment, collecting welfare. I have no problem admitting there's a gridlock problem, but nonetheless it's a problem that comes with prosperity.

The member from Trinity-Spadina talked about the \$200 tax credit. We are very proud to be able to send people back their money. When we discovered that we had a surplus—a lot of times governments, especially the federal government, tend to think it's their money. They forget that the money belongs to the taxpayers. There's only one taxpayer: you and I and the people listening at home. When we find that we have a surplus and those people have sent in a surplus, it's only fair that instead of our deciding how to spend that money, they should be the ones. Somebody asked me, how do I intend to spend my \$200? I spent that to buy shoes and clothes for my children. People are free to do whatever they like with that.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Cordiano: I'm very happy to have this opportunity to speak on this bill and to make some comments. I want to read from the Ontario budget. Let me just read from part of this document.

"The Ontario economy posted another year of very strong economic growth. Real output increased by 4.2%, with substantial advances in consumer and business spending. The housing sector showed exceptional strength, with 100,000 housing starts. More than 150,000 jobs were created last year, lowering the annual unemployment rate. Over the past three years, the Ontario economy has expanded by more than 16% and created 463,000 jobs. Our economy is now in its sixth consecutive year of growth and in recent years has outpaced the economies of each of the group of seven industrial"—

Mr Bradley: Thank you, Paul Martin.

Mr Cordiano: Listen carefully, I say to the member for St Catharines.

"Ontario's export performance is expected to strengthen. Employment is expected to increase at a record pace, with the creation of an estimated 180,000 jobs. This record level of job creation will lower the Ontario unemployment rate to an average of 5.1%."

I just quoted from the budget of 1988, with the red trillium. You remember that, I say to the member for St Catharines.

1700

Mr Bradley: I remember that. They were the good old days.

Mr Cordiano: Interesting numbers and interesting language, and it resembles the budget of today.

Interjection.

Mr Cordiano: Just listen. The good part is coming.

Mind you, there are dissimilarities between the two budgets. One of the things I would like to point out that

was very different in the two budgets, in this budget in the year 1999—let's use that because those are actual numbers—compared to 1988.

In 1988 the Liberal government of the day was spending a total of 7.8% of gross domestic provincial production on capital investments, capital improvements. Pardon me, this was 7.8% of the Ontario budget, the expenditure that year, not the gross domestic product. Excuse me.

In this fiscal budget for 1999, this government planned to spend \$2.2 billion on capital. That's stated in the books of the government, in the budget documents. They also planned to make expenditures outside those budget documents with the SuperBuild fund, and I will allow that the government will spend an additional \$2 billion per year over the next five years. So over the five-year period there will be an additional \$10 billion in capital expenditures. When you add the two—the \$2 billion and the \$2.2 billion that is stated in the budget—the total amount spent on capital, as a percentage of the budget, is 6.7%, substantially lower than it was in 1988.

Capital expenditure is a necessary ingredient in keeping the economy growing. I say to the government you are experiencing a boom time. You are experiencing growth like we experienced in the 1980s. The numbers are very similar. We had job growth. The unemployment rate then was 5.1%; the unemployment rate today is still hovering around 6.3%. You still have a way to go in terms of job creation to match that 1988-89 period. We performed exceedingly well in those years.

Governments have a nasty habit of trying to take credit for what happens in the economy. To some extent they should, but I say to you, the Ontario economy is a wondrous thing. When the economy picks up all over the world, the Ontario economy picks up even greater. We are well positioned and there are some key reasons why that is the case. I'd like to speak to those in just a moment.

One of the key ingredients is capital expenditures—making investments in our infrastructure. Making investments in the health infrastructure and in the social fabric is also important. I say to this government, you are falling well behind in making certain that this economy will keep growing. The infrastructure expenditures that are necessary are not being provided for. I have proved to you that in 10 years the differences are substantial. That 1.1%, 1.2% difference in capital expenditures is huge. It's in the billions. As a matter of fact, I would argue that our infrastructure is dilapidating all around us more rapidly than ever before. This government should be making further additional investments in infrastructure, which it is failing to do.

The GTA alone is expanding at an enormous rate. The gridlock we are experiencing in the GTA, as some of my colleagues have pointed out time and again, is stifling economic activity.

The 407, which this government likes to proclaim they had a hand in somehow inventing, was a project that was around for the last 25 years. In fact, we should have built it. If I have to make a comment to criticize previous

governments, both Conservative and our Liberal government, it would be the fact that we never speeded up the construction of the 407. We had built an interchange at Highway 400, but we did not build the 407 and complete it. That highway was long overdue. It should have been built 20 years ago. In fact, it's going to operate at its maximum capacity very shortly, despite the tolling, which I think is a ludicrous idea, to give this highway away literally in a fire sale to the private sector. Now they're going to jack up toll rates to an impossible level. On top of that, the new owners of the 407 are not even making payments-in-lieu. That's a further bonus they received. No property taxes are being paid.

I would say to the government, while you applaud yourselves and pat yourselves on the back, remember that the Ontario economy is positioned, and has been for many, many years—and you are entrusted with its care. This brings me to the next point. One of the key secrets to keeping our economy moving forward and growing and ensuring that we have a competitive cost advantage with our neighbours to the south is our health care system. Our health care system is a tremendous ace in the hole for this province and for this country. Our health care system allows us to have a tremendous cost advantage over other jurisdictions. In fact, the cost per employee for US manufacturers to provide health care—

Interjections.

Mr Cordiano: Listen carefully. You might learn something. The cost for health care south of the border is around \$3,100 per employee. The cost to Ontario manufacturers for that same employee is about \$540. The difference is substantial. It's in the \$2,100 range. That kind of a difference accrues to those manufacturers in the form of a competitive advantage. We have to make certain that sort of advantage continues to be there. The only way you can do that is to continue to invest properly in the health care system. That isn't happening today. We are devastating our health care system. The infrastructure that's necessary isn't being provided. We were very much against the closure of hospitals, and we told this government. The cost-savings that were supposed to accrue from the closure of hospitals, what have they led to? The recognition that you cannot close hospitals without putting a severe strain on the system.

So the system is suffering badly, and don't tell me you can blame the federal government entirely for this matter. It's totally irresponsible to do that and shirk your responsibilities.

Mr Bradley: You had all kinds of money for tax cuts.

Mr Cordiano: As a matter of fact, there were billions of dollars for tax cuts over the last five years. That wasn't a priority. The federal government had a serious deficit problem. They eliminated that deficit. They are now prepared to cut taxes. That's not the route that you followed. That was the leadership shown by the finance minister of Canada, Paul Martin. That was a clear vision for where this country ought to be going. We are on a sound fiscal footing federally, and that has allowed this federal government to say to the provinces, "Look, we're

going to reinvest in health care, but we're also going to provide some modest tax cuts. That's after we've put our fiscal house in order."

But that's not the plan this government followed in Ontario. They cut taxes. And you know what? That did not have the stimulant effect on the economy for creating jobs that you might think. It certainly did not. With the exceptional growth in exports to the United States, because they are our largest trading partner—and by the way, that's another area of vulnerability that we have in this province. We're vulnerable because we've increased our exports to the United States and have become even more dependent on the United States as a market. The fact of the matter is, even though that has provided us with a very prosperous future, it's not a very secure future. We are hugely dependent on that market. I think we ought to be looking at where we are vulnerable.

1710

We're vulnerable when it comes to the lack of infrastructure spending this government has inflicted upon the economy. If there is a downturn, we will not have made during good economic times the kinds of investments we should have been making during this boom time. This government is failing to make them. I've proved that the capital expenditure budgets of this government don't even measure up to the levels we had in the 1980s. We should have been spending even more on infrastructure. This province needs that infrastructure because we are an export-oriented jurisdiction. We have a huge number of goods moving south on a daily, hourly, minute-by-minute basis. Our roads are being chewed up. We need rapid transit for our GTA corridor. That should be built, not 10 or 15 or 20 years down the road; we should start to build that today. Yet this government hasn't talked about public rapid transit. There's no mention of it in the budget whatsoever.

There are great shortcomings on the part of this government with its budgetary plan with respect to this bill. There are a few areas I want to highlight respecting the bill. They've made certain changes that I think are worthy of some discussion as to how they impact the economy in general. As I say, health care is a key area that needs to be safeguarded by any government anywhere in this country.

In addition to that, I want to highlight the electrical provisions of this bill. The problem with what this government is doing is that the stranded debt of Hydro is now being foisted upon the ratepayers. They will have the sole burden of dealing with the repayment of that debt, and we're concerned about that. They will be paying for it for many years to come. It's something like \$19.5 billion that Ontario Hydro still owes.

The made-for-Ontario tax program: the fact of the matter is that this government can talk about decoupling its income tax from the federal government all it wants. The reason it's doing it is because of the federal government's move to cut taxes. That in effect would make certain that the Ontario government's take from that income tax, the revenue that would accrue from its

income tax take as a percentage of the federal income tax, would be reduced automatically, and therefore this government could not go along with that. They talk about decoupling from the income tax system. I say to the members opposite, be certain that we're not going to set up a boondoggle, a system that would result in about \$300 million a year if you set up your own collection agency. Surely to God that's not going to happen. That would be a disaster of \$300 million in expenditures.

In addition to that, there are the provisions that allow for incorporation by professionals. Obviously this is a boon to doctors and chartered accountants, and presumably the government is trying to stem the flow of our professionals south of the border. But what about teachers and what about nurses? They're fleeing in record numbers and we are losing them daily. We have a shortage of teachers; we have a shortage of nurses. I'm not suggesting they be allowed to incorporate, but certainly we should recognize that they too are professionals, that they too deserve to be treated like professionals, with the kind of respect this government has failed to show for teachers and nurses.

I think the time has come to deal with that in a serious fashion, to recognize that our education system is an integral part of growing our economy well into the future, and that making sustainable investments in education and health, which means dealing with the people who provide the primary care, the nurses and teachers in the education system who provide their service—we shouldn't overlook that. Yet this government fails to recognize how important those professionals are to our system, to maintaining a high-quality education system and a high-quality health care system. We are in danger of losing that quality. It's happening today. There's no mention of those individuals in this budget.

I say to the government, when you pat yourselves on the back, remember that health care is a key component of maintaining our cost-competitive advantage with our neighbours to the south. If you fail to recognize that, you will hurt the Ontario economy, as you are doing now. I suspect that in the future, when and if, God forbid, we should have a downturn, we will feel the effects of that in our health care system even more dramatically than we are today.

You're failing to make the necessary investments in the infrastructure that are required to alleviate the gridlock we're experiencing in the GTA, for example. The SuperBuild fund talks about partnerships with the private sector. I've suggested to you that your capital expenditure budgets don't even meet the requirements that are there today, forgetting what's coming on in the future. In fact, when you compare their capital expenditures to those of our government in the late 1980s, in 1988, as a percentage of total budgetary expenditures, they don't measure up. In 1988, 7.8% of the budget was allocated for capital expenditures. In 1999, it's less than that, at 6.7% if you include, hypothetically, what will happen with the private sector and the SuperBuild fund—substantially lower—and the pressures are enormous for infrastructure spending.

We're not keeping up. Our roads are operating at 125% of capacity. There's no mention of public transit in the budget. I've never heard any of the government members talk about public transit, about any kind of possibility for the growth and expansion of public transit. All they've done is slash budgets and have given the responsibility to the municipalities, downloaded all those responsibilities for roads and public transit. They simply cannot keep up with the demands that are being placed on the infrastructure that's in place now, let alone any new infrastructure we require.

This government has failed to recognize what really keeps this economy going. Tax cuts are all they seem to talk about. As I've proved, there was great growth in the economy in the late 1980s. There was great growth at that time and there's great growth today. Yet you're squandering the opportunity to invest in our infrastructure, in our health care system and in our education system. You'll see that's going to be something we regret in the future.

I would say to the government, when you pat yourselves on the back, remember, you're not making the necessary investments that will ensure our economy grows well into the future and has future prosperity for all.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: The member for York South-Weston makes a number of good observations that I want to pick up on. The main one was the fact that their government and I would dare say the New Democrats, spent more on infrastructure than you guys do.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: You don't like spending, I understand but infrastructure is good for society, right? It has long term benefits, doesn't it? It has long-term consequences not just for you but for your kids. If you can't think for yourselves and about yourselves, think about your children and whether or not they're going to have the benefits of infrastructure dollars, because it's true you're not spending any.

Imagine New Democrats spending in a recession because we believed infrastructure was a critical part of our society. What does this government do? It dumps those responsibilities on to the city and says, "We can't do it. We don't want to do it. We're going to dump it on to the city." The city has no money except property taxes. They've got to go hit on the homeowner to get the money for the infrastructure. They've got two ministries, the Ministry of Housing where the minister doesn't build housing any more—I don't know why he keeps the title—and we've got the Minister of Transportation, who looks after asphalt and a couple of highways, yet he's called the Minister of Transportation. These guys don't have a job any more, but they keep the title and the limousine. Why do you keep the limousine and the extra money if you don't have any work for the title for which you are responsible? No transit, because you've given it away to the cities, and no housing, because you've dumped that down to the cities. You've got nothing left.

You people are not spending. Who is minding the shop for when the economy goes down? Who is worried about the seniors, when in 10 or 15 years we'll have more seniors than anybody can look after? What about a home care program? Where is the money for that?

1720

Mr Hastings: It was fascinating listening to the member for York South-Weston trying to create a parallel between expenditures and taxation in the 1980s and in the 1990s. What he failed to mention—and I believe he was a member of the Peterson government—was that if you look at the numbers back in those years, you had a situation of expenditures rising 15% or 20%, yet the money to cover that was not there. How did we end up with the deficit we're in?

What is so interesting, to listen to the member for York South-Weston, is that he's a member of what they call the Liberal Party of Ontario, but not once in my time over here have I heard them embrace the idea of lower taxes as espoused by Robert Mundell, that great University of Chicago and Columbia University economist who posited the whole view that if you want to grow your economy, you lower your taxes, reduce your red tape and make your government somewhat smaller. You would think they'd be espousing such an idea across the way. When he talks about higher exports to the United States, guess what? Are the states surrounding the Great Lakes higher-taxed jurisdictions than Ontario? I don't think so. Where do you see that in the economic literature?

Our whole economic premise for being here for five years was to bring back the Ontario economy. We used to hear across the way, especially from the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, "Where are the jobs?" I can remember that in 1995, 1996 and 1997. Well, we created an environment that brought about a huge number of jobs and actually increased revenue in this province so we would have those monies for vital services like education and health care that they're always talking about across the way.

Mr Bradley: The limitation on the amount of time a speaker has means he doesn't always have the chance to talk about all the issues. I'm wondering if the member from Lawrence would be interested in recalling for the House that the largest tax cut I can recall in this province was when the Liberal government removed the premiums from OHIP. That was a very regressive tax that did not take into account a person's ability to pay. Those premiums were completely removed.

As well, I want to ask his opinion of the Premier's name on all the signs on the highway, like some southern Republican governor in the United States. You drive along the highway and it says, "Your tax dollars at work. Mike Harris, Premier." One has to wonder what sort of ego a person has, to have a sign with his name on it. Surely it's the Ontario taxpayers' money and not Mike Harris's that is going to these various projects we see from time to time.

The other thing I want him to talk about, if he has time, is the misuse of government Web sites. I was

browsing several government Web sites the other day, and I noted that some of them were partisan. Some of them were not, and I want to commend those ministers, like the Minister of Natural Resources, who do not have partisan Web sites. The Minister of Community and Social Services of course had one. He was still out in the hallway after the government House leader said, "I'm sorry, the Speaker was right in his ruling. We're never going to do it again." Out in the hallway was the YPC of YPCs, John Baird, still saying, "It's the right thing to do."

Last, I want you to mention what you think of the \$185 million this government has squandered on self-serving, blatantly partisan government advertising at the expense of the taxpayer.

Mr Maves: I want to commend the member for York-South Weston on his comments. I always enjoy when the member gets up. I played some hockey with the MPP's team last year. We had a good time in the Gardens. We actually traded the member to the federal Liberals, I think, that day and then proceeded to whack the federal Liberals about 12 to 4. But he's a good member; I enjoy his comments.

I'm happy with the fact that he went back to 1988 to pull out that budget, because there are several things that were different between the 1988 budget and today. He's concerned that he doesn't think we're spending a high enough percentage of our revenues on capital expenditures. A couple of things are a little different today.

Back then, the Mulroney government was contributing about 20% or more of health care costs to the province of Ontario; today the Chrétien government's contributing about 11%. That's one major difference here, and we've had to take some monies from other areas of the budget in order to prop up that health care budget.

Another dissimilarity is that this government has gotten very creative over the past couple of years and we've sought out private-sector and public-private partnerships on capital funding. For instance, when we just had a billion-dollar campaign where we put \$1 billion into college and university capital funding, we leveraged that to get \$800 million also from the private sector. So we've been a little bit more creative and we're actually spending a lot more money in this province on capital right now than the books may appear, because of that creativity.

Lastly, let me say things were indeed rosy in 1988, but that was the one of the biggest tax-and-spend governments in the history of the province. It shows you how far the province can fall and how quickly it can fall when you're raising taxes, as that government was doing in 1988 and 1987 and 1989. They were raising taxes again and again and again, and they ended up killing the economy in Ontario.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Cordiano: I'd like to thank all the members for their comments.

It's important to remember that while this government has cut taxes, they have also off-loaded most of the social costs for welfare and social housing and public transit on

to the municipalities, and now those costs will be borne by the property taxpayers. So, part 2 of the Harris agenda is about to hit with full impact in the very near future when these municipalities will have to increase property taxes to ensure that they have enough revenue to provide for those very critical areas. So I say to the members, don't get too high up on your horse because the impacts of property tax increases is coming to a location near you in your own riding in the not-too-distant future.

The fact of the matter is, fees have gone up for most people in all kinds of areas. Yes, there have been tax cuts, but the fact of the matter is that public transit, social housing, as I say, the cost of social assistance, has been off-loaded to municipalities. These should never be funded from the property tax base. They should be funded from a progressive income tax base. We've strenuously objected to that, and this government completely ignores that.

If the economy should have a downturn, these municipalities will be hard pressed to meet their requirements at the local level. At the end of the day, they'll be coming, cap in hand, to Queen's Park to march toward the Premier's office to ask for the assistance that they're going to need, and you're going to have to bail them out. I say that's not too distant in the future. The city of Toronto is experiencing very difficult shortfalls in its projections. It's just around the corner, so I say this is all a fabrication.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I want to start by saying it's a real privilege to follow the member for York-South Weston, who at one time arguably could have been the leader and I'm now beginning to understand why—why he isn't—no, why. I mean that complementarily. I know that he has an extensive business background, but he has missed a couple of things here.

I think you have to start at the fundamentals. If I look right back to the Common Sense Revolution, and the now Blueprint document that is our next series of formulas for success, we started with the \$11-billion deficit thing. You've got to look at where we were and understand some of the difficult decisions we had to make that all Ontarians shared in. As my colleagues are saying, and we all know the creed very well, each and every hour we were spending \$1 million in excess of the revenue coming in. It was a shameful dilemma. We came up with some fairly straightforward formulas. The opposition have laughed, and today the member for Trinity-Spadina was indeed laughing at it; in fact, he didn't really know how to calculate the numbers. But it was like this: we were in a situation where we had to make changes or the province was basically bankrupt. We came up with a theory: tax cuts create jobs. It's very clearly laid out in this document here that the more we reduced taxes, the more jobs were created—there's almost a direct relationship with job creation—and the more job creation, the more revenue.

1730

I'm going to start basically at Minister Eves's December 4 statement. "Finance Minister Eves today announced

that the Ontario government is projecting a \$1.4-billion surplus this year. Eves said \$1 billion of the surplus comes from the elimination of the province's reserve and will be applied toward net provincial debt reduction."

So any of that surplus that we had held for emergency situations was being moved right straight forward to debt reduction.

"Due to the strong performance of Ontario's economy and our government's robust revenue performance, we are now able to invest in priority areas such as health care and at the same time reduce the province's debt" in an earlier time frame than originally committed. That might be a nice place to sort of look at the revenue side and the expenditure side.

I'm looking at the current economic review that Minister Eves introduced. These are on the accruals they're actuals based on 1996-97, and \$49.4 billion was the actual revenue. I see the actual revenue at the end of the 1999-2000 fiscal year was \$62 billion. That's an increase of almost \$13 billion in revenue. What that \$1 billion tells me is that the economic theories, the lever that we introduced, the 67 individual tax reductions, have increased revenue. That's what's totally revolutionary to any of the people on the opposition side.

But I think the biggest form of compliment is imitation. Imitation is flattery. That imitation could be much better demonstrated than this last week when the Prime Minister of this country, the Honourable Jean Chrétien when speaking at Duke University, indicated that Ontario is very competitive with its neighbouring jurisdiction like New York and Michigan and many parts of the United States where there's a similar kind of industrial mixed economy. He said that basically Ontario has the lowest personal income tax, which creates an attractive investment environment.

On top of that, we have one of the best health care systems, I would say, if I look at the amount of money and the changes that have been made there, and education systems as well. That is a compliment to the very difficult decisions that have been made since 1995.

"In the 2000 budget we challenged the federal government to follow our lead on reducing the capital gain inclusion rate from two thirds to 50%. The federal government responded to our challenge...." There's another case where they see our fiscal strategies and spending strategies are right on target. "To ensure that Ontario taxpayers obtain the full benefit of this move, we will now be implementing the 50% inclusion rate effective October 18, 2000...." So there again, as we're moving they're imitating. I think when the Prime Minister of this country recognizes that, it is certainly in itself an indicator that we are on the right track.

If Mr Phillips, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, has a chance or any time left, he is probably going to spend a couple of moments talking about all of this growth and prosperity, and he will say there is growth and prosperity, because he's the critic. I haven't heard him say anything about these 900,000 jobs that the economy has created, but he should get to a few of the

fundamentals that are in here. In 1985-95 the Liberals and NDP tripled Ontario's debt, from \$49 billion to \$102 billion, and at the end of this fiscal year we'll have paid down the debt by \$2.5 billion, exceeding our Blueprint commitment, as I explained earlier.

But I think the important thing here is to look at some of the measurements: the debt-to-GDP ratio is actually decreasing. That's an important measurement. It may be a little bit obscure for some, but in 1995 the debt-to-GDP ratio—that's the amount of debt and the growth in GDP—was 31%. Today it stands at 26.7%, indicating that there is a lower ratio of debt-to-GDP, which means we're growing the economy faster than we're growing any debt.

The attributing of the amount of growth to exports is another part of his remarks, I'm sure. I've heard him speak and the comments are usually the same every time, and I'm trying to anticipate them being the same again because I think he's going to speak again.

Ontario deserves its fair share of immigrants. He mentioned that today in question period. He said there would be an increase of—I forget the number—a million new Canadians who would be immigrating into Ontario. I think that's also part of our strategy. If you look at the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board's A Road Map to Prosperity, which I am going to cover somewhat, there are a number of cases where a very rich and very diverse economy and a very rich and diverse culture are addressed as well.

If you look at—I'm going to find it in my notes. I do want to find that and get to that.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): It's important to be properly informed.

Mr O'Toole: Yes, to get it right rather than just go on. Business investment and consumer spending are leading Ontario's economic growth. Eighty per cent of our growth is related to what we are doing right here in Ontario. I've got to repeat that in case the member for Scarborough-Agincourt perhaps isn't listening. He probably is. Eighty per cent of our growth is related to what we are doing right here in Ontario. Twenty per cent is related to our net exports.

As well, our employment growth rate since 1995 has been 15.5%, compared to 7.4% for Michigan and 6.7% for Ohio. Job growth rate: we have created over 830,000 net new jobs since 1995, greatly exceeding our CSR commitment of 725,000.

We've said all along that some of the tax strategies, including some of the venture capital and stimulating that through tax credits—we've also encouraged the federal government to reintroduce those venture capital funds. To the general public those strategies are of not much consequence, but they are the very strategies that explain the rapid growth, because 80% of the growth in new jobs is really occurring in the small business sector. We're creating the kind of climate where those small business people know this government is there to support that growth.

I'm going to make a small change because I want to put on the record some of the things in this document

here, A Road Map to Prosperity. I think it's important for people to be aware that this document is in fact a blueprint. This blueprint starts with five strategic goals. Any government needs to have a vision and a road map, and that's what I'm presenting here today. This isn't just a numbers game, it's a road map to prosperity, and that road map to prosperity is managed by Premier Harris and our finance minister, Ernie Eves. On the other side, I don't see anyone able to even carry the book, let alone write it.

The five principles are knowledge and skills for prosperity, which I will cover in some detail; an innovative culture, as I mentioned earlier, and I will go into some depth later. A strong global orientation: Minister Palladini, as I speak, has committed to open trade offices overseas. In fact, I believe he's overseas now doing just that, doing what he promised. Building our industrial and regional strengths: I can tell you that we've opened the Innovation Centre in Durham and a small business enterprise centre, very well received. A favourable investment climate: as I said, that means just exactly what Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin are doing—recognizing that the tax holiday that's been put on power development programs, the innovative tax credit that has been allowed for young entrepreneurs to take capital credits and avoid paying capital gains on those investments. This is how you feed and fuel what I call an entrepreneurial culture. That's the change; it's not the same old, same old.

1740

I compliment Mr Stockwell, our Minister of Labour, as well for bringing in flexibility in the workplace with three pieces of labour legislation, in the industrial-commercial-trade sector and the Employment Standards Act, which has received some attention. In fact, it doesn't say anything in that bill about working 60 hours a week; it gives employees the right to choose the hours they work. That flexibility is what the opposition just doesn't get. It's the innovative culture. People working in a knowledge-based economy are certainly smart enough to make those kinds of decisions.

I'm going to comment on a few of the five basic principles, and I think it's important to put on the record this Road Map to Prosperity, because these are the principles on which we are going to expand or explode into the new century, starting next year.

Knowledge and skills are to ensure that Ontario's education and training system is high-quality and market-responsive; that is, training children and young people for an economy that exists. That's why we put in the "new economy" investments in computers and engineering. That's where the jobs are. It's not discrediting the value of any other education, but it's linking up the skill shortages that I hear about today in the Ottawa silicon valley into what our learning institutions are providing.

Number two under knowledge and skills is to promote strong employment skills and a commitment to lifelong learning. That is a culture of lifelong learning. It applies to the people in this House. It applies to the parents, the children and those people who recognize that now that

we're in a global economy, we've got to have the right skills in the right place at the right time. He who sits back will be lost.

It is somewhat aggressive and assertive to recognize that, but we want a prosperous economy so we can have strong health care, strong education and strong social supports for people who need our support. Without that, without the strong economy, the rest is all platitudes. Mr Rae found out in government that you can't spend your way out of an economic recession. You have to have strategic, directional programs, which this government has.

Number three is to facilitate smooth school-to-work, job-to-job transitions. In fact, in the whole curriculum reform, if you look at it, there's the three different streams that are moving through our secondary school system as we speak. I will admit it's a more rigorous, quality-driven curriculum.

The second strategic goal is the innovative culture that I mentioned in the five strategies, building an innovative capacity throughout the economy that, like the Wisdom Exchange, champions the entrepreneurs of the year. The Global Traders Awards are coming up in the next couple of weeks. These are celebrating successes, looking forward and partnering with those innovative companies like RIM and other Canadian-based companies that are, in many cases, partnered with our academic institutions.

The third strategic goal is the strong global orientation that aggressively markets Ontario internationally as an attractive place to invest. We're doing it. Minister Palladini is out there selling it right now, expanding Ontario's trade with the world. Develop world-class infrastructure to connect Ontario to the global marketplace, promote global citizenship and a cosmopolitan outlook and a positive Ontario, preferred home for the world's best.

The fourth strategic goal is industrial and regional strength. Encourage more effective local governance to support local economic development leadership. I could maybe talk on that. It was part of what Mr Cordiano, the member from York South-Weston, was talking about, the whole trade between the Who Does What exercise and municipal transfers. It should be realized that we uploaded \$3 billion worth of expenditures, education costs, off the residential and industrial-commercial tax base. We swapped with them something like \$2.5 billion in services.

I agree that some of those things need to be sorted out, specifically transit. I believe there's an awful lot that has to be spent on transit. We've heard that in the news recently and in the future—I think it's a larger question, though. I think they have to integrate transit, but it's capitalization on the economic development potential of the GTA and other large urban centres.

Clearly you've got to have a healthy Toronto. Toronto is the centre of Canada. I'm not trying to discredit any other part of Canada or Ontario, but you have to have a healthy heart to have a healthy province, and I suspect this government is committed to that. I think our

commitment to the Olympics is evidence of that. The infrastructure will be put in place as part of that Olympic infrastructure, not just for the waterfront but it will include GO Transit and other high-speed rail links and corridors, I'm confident.

That's part of what SuperBuild is all about: to build on the strength and capacity and potential of northern and rural Ontario. They complement the other parts of the province, a wonderful, rich, diverse, environmentally beautiful province. I know it's important when I look at Mr Snobelen and Ontario's Living Legacy, which is the parks system that has been created that complements the growth and recreational lifestyles the future will demand.

Number five is a favourable investment climate, to ensure sound fiscal management, provide the right climate for growth and investment, reward entrepreneurship—I've repeated that a few times, but it's one of our investment climate strategies—and remove barriers to business activity. Many would refer to that as the Re Tape Commission. Mr Joe Spina is the chair of that. Bob Wood, the member for London West, was a member. As well, the member for Scarborough Centre, Ms Musilinski, was on that. A number of members work on these subcommittees where we meet with stakeholder groups that tell us what sorts of barriers are preventing investment, and we act responsibly as guardians of the investment climate and the environmental climate in the province.

I would say to you that this is worth picking up. Anyone who is watching should get one because it is the Road Map to Prosperity. I'm telling you, it's the plan. It is available on the Web site. Mr David Lindsay is the president and CEO of the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board. It's at www.gov.on.ca. Look on there for OJIB, the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, and their report can assure you this should be a reference point for everyone of us.

There's one final commitment I should say publicly. I'm looking at the minister responsible for children. I know that we're meeting now to involve—if you were to look at the statistics in future years, by 2016 the child population of Ontario will be three million. Look at the plans and strategies in place there under Ontario Promise. That's the Premier's five-point commitment to children in Ontario.

Complementing that is the strategy our minister, Margaret Marland is developing. Healthy Babies, Healthy Children is a new program to screen infants. There's preschool speech and language, early literacy initiative, extended parental leave, and also arguing for our share in early child development over five years. These supports in Ontario's Promise, are "a healthy start," "an ongoing positive relationship with a caring adult," "a safe place that offers positive, meaningful activities" outside the home, "marketable skills through effective education" and the opportunity to give back to the community. Those are the five principles for each individual, our children, that the minister in charge of children, Margaret

Marland, working with the Premier and with caucus and cabinet, will build on in the future.

If you look at the Road Map to Prosperity and just a few of the five principles I've mentioned, and look at the broader picture of education reform and our reform agenda with respect to children and their future, I believe it is the road to prosperity, and this budget is just one piece of that.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Phillips: The member, probably inadvertently, wasn't aware of some of the numbers in the government's own documents. I don't normally like to go back 10 years ago, because I think the public wants to move on, but just so we can be sure of the record, when the Peterson government left office, the provincial debt to GDP was 14.6%, and now under Mike Harris it's 28.7%; it has doubled. According to government documents, the public debt interest as a percentage of revenue in the last year of the Peterson government was 10.5%. It's now 15.1%. In the final year of the Peterson government, total expenditure as a percentage of GDP was 15.5%, and today it's 15.6%.

1750

I think the public is often surprised that Premier Harris has added \$24 billion to the debt of the province. The debt of the province has gone up almost 25%. In fact, from the time Mr O'Toole started speaking to the time he finished, 20 minutes, we had to pay \$70,000 just to cover the interest on the debt Premier Harris has added to the province. Think about that. Every hour we're spending over \$200,000 just to pay the interest on the debt Premier Harris has added. Mr O'Toole, in his 20-minute talk—\$70,000 in interest costs as a result of Mike Harris.

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: I know this comes as a shock to my business friends. I almost hate to shock them like this, but I always say, "Harris has added \$24 billion. Every hour we're spending \$200,000 just to pay the interest on Premier Harris's debt." It's unfortunate but true. I hate to disillusion Mr O'Toole, but those are the facts.

Mr Marchese: Just to respond to the member from Durham, I remember the Premier saying he had developed a recession-proof economy. Imagine the power this man has. Imagine the words that flow ex cathedra from the Premier: a recession-proof economy. How does he do it? He does it magically by tax cuts to high-income individuals. Yes, that includes union men and women who are making \$70,000 and \$80,000 and want a piece of that action. And it includes millionaires who don't need the money and a corporate sector that in a good economy is going to get \$5 billion in the next three or four years. God bless the Tories. That's the magic of the solution to the problem of future recessions.

Don't worry. Mike Harris says he has created a recession-proof economy. Can you believe that, good taxpayers of Ontario? You have to listen to those words very carefully, because when the next recession comes—and some people are predicting it's going to come in a year or a year and a half—who's going to be there to

mind the shop and look after the seniors, who are being kicked out of hospitals after one day because there's no room for them and are sent home and there's nobody to look after them because either families are strapped and there are no resources or not enough money. On whom are they going to rely?—the government isn't there. They're going to rely on volunteers to look after seniors, you would think. There is no government any more; there are just volunteers who are going to be looking after you.

The member from Durham says we need healthy cities, but he has dumped everything on to the cities. The cities don't have any money. They are impoverished. They are so poor. There is no money left, and they dump everything on to the cities. Who will be looking after the shop when the recession comes?

Mr Young: It is an honour to comment on the remarks made this afternoon by the member from Durham. I thank him once again, not only for what he said today but for the assistance he has provided on a continuing basis to the Ministry of Finance. Without his help, frankly, the budget wouldn't be as complete and comprehensive as it is.

There was a significant level of discussion—quite a bit of discussion over the last short while—about debt. It's trite to say we all oppose more debt. At one time or other, all the parties ran advocating less debt, but some of the parties were more frank than others. To the credit of the Liberals, in their red book in the 1995 campaign they acknowledged it was going to take some time to turn around the economy of this province, by reason of the dire straits we were in. The Liberals acknowledged that we would have to continue to go into debt for a considerable period of time. Of course, that shouldn't come as a great surprise, because if one considers their record, together with that of the NDP, between 1985 and 1995, one will clearly see that the Liberals and the NDP tripled Ontario's debt. It went from \$49 million to \$102 million in 10 short years under the Liberal and NDP administration of this province.

Interjections.

Mr Young: I misspoke; it is in fact "billion."

Let me say this: at the end of this fiscal year we will have paid down the debt by more than \$2.5 billion. That greatly exceeds the Blueprint commitment made by this government in the last campaign.

Mr Cordiano: It is clear that the approach this government has taken is to add an additional \$24 billion to the accumulated debt of this province. In fact, they did that at the same time they were cutting taxes. The most fiscally responsible thing at the time would have been to pay down that debt instead of adding to it. If they had done that at least, then I think the economy would have had a chance to grow even faster in those earlier years. It didn't do that. It didn't turn around. The tax cut got in the way and what ended up happening is that they underfunded severely the essential services that we needed in health care and in education. They took it out on health care and education. They took billions of dollars out. Further to that, they added insult to injury by offloading

to municipalities the cost of social services like housing and public transit. And now, if there is a slowdown, we have an economy that is vulnerable because of the structural changes they've made to the province's fiscal infrastructure.

So I think you have to look really hard and say to yourselves that if there is a slowdown, revenues will be slowing down. There won't be the ability for the municipalities to make those essential payments; revenues won't be coming in for them either. The property taxpayers of this province are going to get dinged as a result, and the services that are necessary, like public transportation, are going to suffer even more in the future. So I say to the government, you have created an economy that is vulnerable because it will not have the necessary revenues in the future, and the sustainability of this economy will not be there in the future. I say to the members, look really hard at what you've created.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr O'Toole: It is a pleasure, as I said, to listen to some of the responses. The member for Willowdale tried to dispel the myth that the debt is growing, and I think he did it very, very well. If I look at the 1995 Liberal plan, it is clear that we would have had more debt today. On top of that, we've taken on the very difficult task of restructuring Ontario Hydro, now Hydro One and OPG, and, if someone looks into that stranded debt issue, the

compensation reform of WSIB, which had about another \$12 billion in stranded debt, we managed much of that debt that isn't showing. Mr Phillips knows that. I know that those were taken into the government books.

I have to correct the member for York South-Weston. The only people who took money out of health care were Allan Rock and Martin. Shame on them. This government has moved it from \$17.4 billion to almost \$23 billion. These have been difficult decisions, because these are ministries that have borne that load of moving out expenditures—and I should say, in all caution, we have increased not just the revenue by \$14 billion; what we've actually done is increase the expenditures by almost \$1 billion. Those strategic investments I believe are part of the recovery plan that I mentioned.

I think the member for Willowdale, as the parliamentary assistant, has spent considerable time discussing some of the small business decisions. And I think one of the top ones is the ORICGA, the Ontario research and investment capital gains allowance. If people want to spend some time—and we know the hi-tech sector is growing—there's an example of investing in our future in our young people and in technology. The other side just doesn't get it.

The Speaker: It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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	Minister of Labour /		Universities / ministre de la Formation
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		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario

First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 18 December 2000

Lundi 18 décembre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 18 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 18 décembre 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RAMSEY INDUSTRIAL ROAD

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Again I rise to bring to the attention of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and this House the need to make the Ramsey industrial road, sometimes called the Sultan road, into a provincial highway.

As members would know, this road is a critical transportation link for health care, business and tourism. For too long, this Domtar industrial road has impeded safe and expeditious travel to the east.

I have asked the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to form a partnership with the communities involved, with Domtar and with the provincial government to upgrade this road in a staged, safe and expeditious way. He has told me this is not a priority.

Today I will be presenting on petitions over 6,000 names of people who share these concerns. I want to thank Chapeau Mayor Earle J. Freeborn for his continued and persistent work on this important public issue and for making certain that the petitions were circulated. Mr Freeborn has the support of communities from Sudbury through to Thunder Bay, including Wawa, Dubreuilville, White River, Manitouwadge, Hornepayne, Schreiber, Nipigon, Marathon and a multitude of others.

Clearly, for northern people this project is a priority. Mr Hudak needs to rethink his government's priorities. The status quo is not acceptable. We need action and we need it now.

NATALIE DAYNEKA

Mr Brian Coburn (Ottawa-Orléans): With millions of people around the world infected with the HIV disease, the story of an Ontarian doing her part to help infected children in this country speaks volumes. Ottawa-Orléans resident Dr Natalie Dayneka has received a nationwide award for her work with HIV-infected children: The Commitment to Care Award by Pharmacy Practice magazine.

Dr Dayneka is a pharmacist who has worked as a clinical specialist at CHEO since 1993. Her duties include finding proper dosages while factoring into consideration a patient's age, and she works in creating more favourable ways of administering medication.

Dr Dayneka must conduct much of her own research, use medical chat rooms on the Internet and communicate with drug companies to come up with a proper dosage for kids because drug companies are focusing on the bigger market in their production: HIV drugs for adults.

There were an estimated 45,000 to 53,000 Canadians living with the HIV infection at the end of 1999, and Dr Dayneka is unique: she is one of only three pediatric pharmacists in Canada specializing in HIV treatment for children. For that reason, she has created dosing charts that have been distributed coast to coast.

I congratulate Dr Daneyka on her award and I commend her for the dedication that she has shown in treating our kids living with HIV.

FOOD SAFETY

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Last month in this Legislature the Minister of Agriculture said food safety is a top priority of his government. I was wondering whether the minister or any of his staff had a chance to read the Toronto Star this weekend. It demonstrates quite clearly that it's not the case.

The minister claims he's working with health and natural resources on developing a strategy that gives Ontario consumers more trust and confidence in food safety, all the while cutting the number of food investigators from seven to four. That's supposed to lead to trust and confidence in food safety? Hardly.

Uninspected meat is a risk to public health. Officials warn of rabies, tuberculosis, salmonella and E coli. A Ministry of Health memo says uninspected carcasses have turned up on banquet halls across this province, yet this minister says, "I have to assume we're catching all the people who are not appropriately putting the meat through a licensed plant." We owe a debt of gratitude to the Toronto Star for pointing out the reality.

What does this government feel is adequate punishment for putting public health at risk? A \$200 to a \$500 fine—a pittance.

The story has been in the Toronto media for a month. This city is the largest consumer of meat in the province. Ontario farmers produce the cleanest, safest and highest-quality meat in the world, yet this minister sat idly by while the reputation of our agri-food industry has been once again sullied by a few bad apples.

He's the minister of agriculture. It is incumbent on him to ensure consumer confidence and promote Ontario's agricultural industry. He's failed miserably.

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak about one of our most important responsibilities not only as legislators but also as Ontarians, and that is the responsibility to provide assistance for those with developmental disabilities.

It was my privilege last Friday to be part of a presentation of a cheque of more than \$1 million to the Community Living associations of Durham region so that they can provide residential assistance and accommodation for 20 people with developmental disabilities.

This fund is part of a \$50-million new investment announced by the Ministry of Community and Social Services last spring. It will provide for adults who are living at home with aging parents, adults whose needs change as they age and young adults moving from the child welfare system.

It has often been said that society may be judged by how it treats its weakest members. I believe that we look to Durham for examples of effective, compassionate leadership from agencies like the Central Seven of Port Perry, the Oshawa/Clarington Association for Community Living, Christian Horizons and the Durham Association of Family Respite Services, along with the Ajax Pickering Whitby Association for Community Living. These agencies ensure that people with special needs are able to remain close to their families and that supportive systems are in place.

I would like to thank the members of the board and volunteers Peter Dill, Glenn Taylor, Pam Domingos, Paul Burston, Mayah Sevinck, Steven Finlay and the many volunteers and families that make services work for the people in Durham who really need our help.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased the Minister of Municipal Affairs is in the House. The rationale for the Harris government's move to various amalgamations has been the creation of smaller, more efficient governments providing better quality services at lower cost.

This clearly hasn't been the case in Metro Toronto, where we've seen a quarter-million-dollar budget shortfall balloon to over \$1 billion, projected, and His Worship there talking about a projected bankruptcy with the downloading of social housing.

It didn't work with the three hospitals in Hamilton, none of which were running at a deficit and which then had a deficit balloon to \$40 million, nor with the school boards' amalgamation, which has left kids at risk in terms of transportation policy and has been pitting community against community around school closings.

Now we read from the government's appointed transition board chair and other elected officials that there may be up to a 10% tax increase, notwithstanding the area rating, and that doesn't include the \$100-million projected infrastructure shortfall. They also note that

there's been no commitment to date from this government for adequate transitional funding, currently projected at \$46 million, twice the original projection.

It's the Christmas season, and the people of my riding want some assurance that legislation will be put in place to protect them from the very tax increases we were promised wouldn't occur and that adequate transitional funding for this new city that has been created will in fact be provided.

1340

INJURED WORKERS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I am proud to give voice to a number of injured workers who are here from United Steelworkers of America local 7135. They work at National Steel Car. They're here in the gallery today, and they're here to protest the fact that Bill 99 is denying them the opportunities that they would have had under the previous legislation that existed in this province.

This group of workers has been wronged, in my opinion and that of the member from Hamilton East. We've both attended a public meeting of all these workers. They've been wronged by the company, they have been wronged by this government in terms of the legislation that they've rammed down the throats of injured workers and they've been wronged by the board, which to date has not guaranteed them that their rehab programs and their money is going to be continued after their EI runs out, which is where they are now.

There were about 30 people in that room, and I can tell you that these workers, who were injured through no fault of their own, are desperate in terms of what their future is. We said at the time, when you rammed Bill 99 through, that there were going to be innocent injured workers that were hurt, and their families were hurt.

We are a week away from Christmas. They have no idea how they're going to manage to put food on the table next year, and at the end of the day it all lies at the doorstep of Mike Harris and this anti-worker government.

JOYCE FEE

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'm very proud to have attended the Order of Ontario ceremony last week when one of my constituents, Joyce Fee, was a recipient.

Joyce Fee, the first female principal in Peterborough county, was instrumental in initiating educational reform for instruction of children with disabilities. A single mother of five, she became founder and leader of many support groups and always has been an advocate for children.

Joyce initiated several programs, including Home Family Relief, Family Support Worker, Peterborough Project for Special Needs Adults and Community Action Network and Special Olympics. As well, she has been a

active member of Soroptimist International of Peterborough for over 22 years.

In 1995, Joyce received the eastern Canada region's Woman of Distinction Award for her outstanding achievements in her personal, professional, business and volunteer activities.

My congratulations, Joyce, on your achievement.

TED THORNLEY

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I stand solemnly and with great sadness as I would like to comment on the recent and untimely death of Ted Thornley, who was the president of the Police Association of Ontario.

The Police Association of Ontario, representing over 13,000 municipal police personnel, is deeply saddened by the loss of their president, who passed away early Friday morning at the very young age of 49.

Mr Thornley led a life dedicated to community policing and the understanding that in order for police to be effective, they need to be an integral part of the greater community. He was a police constable with the Waterloo Regional Police Service and became involved with their association in 1974. In 1988, he was elected as president of the Waterloo Regional Police Association and has served in that capacity since then. Ted Thornley was then elected to the board of directors of the Police Association of Ontario in 1995 and was serving as president.

Ted Thornley was greatly admired by many people, including myself. I had the privilege and honour of meeting him. Ted led a life dedicated to his family and friends, the greater community as well as his continuous dedication to his role as both a police officer and in particular president of the Police Association of Ontario. He will be greatly missed by everyone here, and I know that all of us here share that.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of Dalton and the Liberal caucus and I hope the rest of the House, to send our sincere condolences to his wife, Karen, and their three children, Vicki, Kerri and Jamie, during this time of sorrow. Our prayers and thoughts are with him and his family.

Speaker, I would also ask for unanimous consent for one moment of silence.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed. If all members and our friends could join in a moment of silence for our colleague.

The House observed a moment's silence.

NORM JARY

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): He still begins every presentation with "Hi, everybody" in his booming, enthusiastic sportscaster voice. His remarks are still always prepared lovingly by his wife, Jean. I rise today to pay tribute to a fine gentleman and a fellow politician, loved and respected in Guelph, Mr Norm Jary. He began his career as a sports and news broadcaster for CJOY Radio, but today I would like to honour him for

his 37 years of dedication in serving the public as a member of Guelph city council, 16 of those as our mayor.

Norm had a personal interest in parks and recreation, consistently serving on that particular committee. This commitment was celebrated last June when the community park was renamed the Norm Jary Park. He has worked tirelessly to beautify our city, showing up on things like Communities in Bloom and even in his own garden, which is often included in the Guelph Historical Society of garden tours.

Whether it was supporting the development of shopping malls, Exhibition Park, the Victoria Road or Centennial arenas, or establishing the Macdonald Stewart Art Gallery or the Guelph Arts Council, Norm worked tirelessly to encourage ingenuity and competitiveness in our city. In 1993, he was honoured with the commemorative medal for the 125th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada, granted only to citizens who have contributed to the quality of life in Canada and in their communities all across this great country of Canada.

Norm's genuine love for his community and his family are legendary in our city. He was an outstanding leader and in his retirement is to be commended for his varied contributions to Guelph-Wellington.

VISITORS

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Today we had the opportunity to recognize the Ontario Parks bursary awards for young people who have been exemplary in their service to the public and our parks. Some 40 of these young people received a \$500 bursary, with help from our corporate sponsors, and four of those young people are in the gallery today. I'd like to introduce them: Carol Reesor, Alex Curry, Ryan Good and Valerie Cavendar.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CITY OF KAWARTHA LAKES ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA CITÉ DE KAWARTHA LAKES

Mr Clement moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 170, An Act respecting the new municipality of The Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes / Projet de loi 170, Loi concernant la nouvelle municipalité appelée The Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister for a short statement.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Briefly, this legislation will help the city of Kawartha Lakes meet taxpayer needs and save taxpayers' money when it comes into existence on January 1. The legislation has been put forward at the request of the Kawartha Lakes transition board, which

includes the mayor-elect of the new city. If passed by the Legislature, the legislation would give the transition board a few new powers to enter into certain agreements on behalf of the new city. It would also give the new city additional authority to allocate certain municipal costs to taxpayers in specific areas of the city.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the transition board for their hard work and dedication to the new city.

VICTIM EMPOWERMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR L'HABILITATION DES VICTIMES

Mr Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act to give victims a greater role at parole hearings, to hold offenders accountable for their actions, to provide for inmate grooming standards, and to make other amendments to the Ministry of Correctional Services Act / Projet de loi 171, Loi visant à accroître le rôle des victimes aux audiences de libération conditionnelle et à responsabiliser les délinquants à l'égard de leurs actes, prévoyant des normes relatives à la toilette des détenus et apportant d'autres modifications à la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Snobelen, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Jackson, Cameron	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Kormos, Peter	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John	Wood, Bob
Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.	Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 39; the nays are 0.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The minister for a short statement.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): Victims of crime and their families have told us that living in the aftermath of crime is a difficult and daunting challenge. If this bill

was passed, victims would have greater participation in parole hearings. The bill will also implement a zero-tolerance policy for acts of violence against correctional staff; it will establish standards of professional ethics for all staff involved in providing correctional services, including those employed by both public and private operators; it will provide for grooming and appearance standards for inmates serving sentences in correctional institutes relevant to security, health and safety issues; and it will implement a process to monitor, intercept or block communications between inmates and others where reasonable for the safety and security of other persons and institutions.

GREATER JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR L'OBLIGATION DE RENDRE DES COMPTES EN MATIÈRE DE JUSTICE

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act to provide for greater accountability in judicial appointments / Projet de loi 172, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte en ce qui concerne les nominations à la magistrature.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1400 to 1405.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Snobelen, John
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Spina, Joseph
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Sterling, Norman W.
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Stewart, R. Gary
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Mushinski, Marilyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Runciman, Robert W.	Young, David
Hardeman, Ernie	Sampson, Rob	

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	McLeod, Lyn
Boyer, Claudette	Curling, Alvin	McMeekin, Ted
Bradley, James J.	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Brown, Michael A.	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Churley, Marilyn	Levac, David	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 38; the nays are 26.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The member for London West for a short statement.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): This bill is intended to provide greater public accountability for judicial appointments. It proposes to do that by making the appointment process for justices of the peace the same as that for judges: having the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee publish the criteria used in assessing candidates, permitting the Legislature by resolution to set or change these criteria, having the names of all the people found qualified and suitable for appointment submitted to the Attorney General for consideration and requiring approval by the Legislature of all proposed appointments before they become effective.

For the first time in the history of this province, the Legislature would set the criteria for judicial appointments and the Attorney General would be responsible to the Legislature for following them in each and every appointment. Surely, it is time to take this process out of the backrooms and put it fully in the hands of all the elected representatives. Transparency and democracy do work.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek once again unanimous consent to allow for the singing of O Canada at the beginning of daily proceedings in this Legislature. As you know, the students of this province, by this government, sing O Canada. There is no reason we can't sing our national anthem in this Legislature.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 12 midnight on Monday, December 18, 2000, for the purpose of considering government business.

1410

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm till 12 midnight on Tuesday, December 19, 2000, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Education. Last Thursday I presented in this Legislature a peace plan. That plan respects your government's bottom line: your insistence that Ontario teachers provide 1,250 minutes of classroom instruction every week. At the same time, it will restore a sense of peace to our high schools and it will restore a positive learning climate, which the Education Improvement Commission has told us is sorely lacking.

You now have had three days to more fully consider my peace plan. At the same time, Madam Minister, you have also had an opportunity to consider how well the plan is being received by the broader public. Having had that opportunity to reconsider and to gauge the public reaction, will you now agree to support our peace plan to put our students first?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): The Education Improvement Commission very clearly said that politics in the classroom—if people were bringing politics into the classroom regardless of who they were—was wrong and would undermine student achievement. I certainly agree with that, and this government agrees with that.

This one suggestion that the honourable member keeps on about is a suggestion the OSSTF, the public high school union, brought forward some years ago. An arbitrator has subsequently ruled that it does not achieve any of the government's objectives. The honourable member keeps saying it's a win-win-win, or a compromise for all, and asks taxpayers for another \$150 million and asks students for a longer workday. Where's the compromise on the teacher union side?

Mr McGuinty: Minister, this is going to present a real and difficult challenge for you. I am asking you to put Ontario students first. I am going to be asking you about this all week long, and I'll be asking you to do the same thing time and time again: put the politics aside and put our students first.

You've had an opportunity to gauge the public reaction to this proposal. You've seen the Toronto Sun, you've seen the Hamilton Spectator, you've seen the Toronto Star and you've seen the Ottawa Sun. These newspapers represent the full spectrum of political diversity in Ontario and they've all said the same thing: this plan is worthy of serious consideration and it's high

time that we, the legislators in this House, worked together to put our students first. That's exactly what our plan is all about, Madam Minister. Why won't you work with me to put our students first?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, we were quite prepared to work with the honourable member to put the students of Hamilton-Wentworth first, and he refused and did not support back-to-work legislation. Second, I met with all our education partners some weeks ago. They put forward a number of proposals that are worthy of study. We are looking at those. As recently as today I met with representatives of the teacher unions to talk about many proposals. We are doing the work on that to solve these things.

It's interesting that, on one hand, last week the Liberal Party was standing up saying we have a teacher shortage and was worried that there wouldn't be teachers in the classroom. Then, the same week, they put forward a proposal that would actually make the situation worse. It is not a helpful policy proposal to make an even worse challenge for school boards trying to hire qualified and good teachers at the front of the classroom.

Mr McGuinty: I've heard from school boards, I've heard from teachers, I've heard from parents and I've heard from students. I've heard from no one who stands against giving very serious consideration to this peace plan, save and except for you. Apparently, the only real impediment to restoring peace in our schools is you, the person in charge of our schools.

Here's a call I got from a parent last week when she heard about the peace plan. Cathy Balsys has three students attending Martingrove Collegiate, just outside Toronto. She says, "This plan would truly give our kids more quality time, while restoring dignity to our teachers and harmony in our schools. I am so pleased that we are finally putting the needs of my kids first."

Madam Minister, if you don't sense this, I at least sense a heavy responsibility to try to reintroduce some sense of stability and to eliminate the turmoil inside public education today. This is the kind of thing that can't wait until after Christmas. I put forward a positive, substantive policy proposal. It has been well received in many quarters. If you don't agree with this, Madam Minister, where is your proposal?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Let's talk about some of the proposals. OSSTF said the workload, set almost three years ago, wasn't workable. There have been strikes over it; there's been an election over it. It was set three years ago; they said it wasn't workable. So we compromised on that this spring, and we put forward 64 million taxpayers' dollars to make that happen. But they still weren't satisfied.

Then they said job loss was going to be a problem, so we put forward \$263 million of the taxpayers' money to hire more teachers to have smaller classes to try to deal with the workload. They still weren't satisfied. We gave them flexibility in how they could implement it, so that the teacher who goes out and does the extracurricular activities gets the extra time to do them. They rejected

that; they wouldn't agree to that. They're still not satisfied. Now, through the Liberal Party, the OSSTF brings forward an idea that was rejected three years ago and says it is the magical solution.

I didn't hear any union leaders standing up and saying extracurricular activities are going to be miraculously restored in our schools—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up. New question.

Mr McGuinty: The second set of questions is to the same minister. The matter is so important to us that we're prepared to devote the time and energy necessary to helping the minister see the light in this matter.

Minister, there are probably 100 reasons that you are prepared to articulate here and during the rest of the week as to why we shouldn't move forward with this peace plan. But there is one overwhelming, predominant reason why you and I have to move forward with this peace plan. It's simply because our kids aren't getting the quality education to which they are entitled. That's what it's all about.

I can tell you that Ontario families have the same kind of rule right across the province. When it comes to matters that are in the interests of our children, kids come first. That's exactly what this plan is about. It's about putting our kids first.

Since I introduced this bill in this House, Madam Minister, I've heard from teachers and school boards, and do you know what they're telling me? They are sick and tired of the fighting, and they want a way out. They know, in their heart of hearts, that what they're supposed to be doing is putting the interests of our students first. That's what this peace plan is all about. Why won't you help me, Madam Minister? Let's put students first.

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, peace is fine, but what parents want is better schools. That's what we need: increased student achievement.

The standards that are being put in place across this province, the proposals that we were elected to implement—stronger curriculum, standardized teaching, testing, teacher testing programs—those are the standards that we were elected to implement that will achieve higher student achievement for our students and better schools.

This proposal is asking the taxpayers for another \$150 million, asking our students to spend a longer time in their school day. So, more work for students, more paid by taxpayers, reduced workload by teachers. That is not the solution that we need for all of the problems. If this means that the teacher union that is objecting to all of this, that is putting forward this proposal, is now prepared to work with this government—

1420

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you've taken \$1.8 billion out of public education in Ontario. I think putting \$150 million back in public education in order to give peace a chance is a damn good investment.

Some 75% of our high school students aren't getting the extracurricular activities to which they are entitled. If you don't understand just how urgent the matter is, I'm going to refer you, one more time, to the Education Improvement Commission, your own commission, which just released its final report and said the following:

"We cannot overstate our concern about the reduction in extracurricular activities. Research shows that students who take part in extracurricular activities enjoy greater overall success in school. If the current impasse continues, it's clear that more students will drop out and fewer will succeed." This, from your own commissioner.

We have a full-blown, genuine crisis in Ontario high schools. I sense a heavy responsibility and my caucus senses a heavy responsibility to try to do something positive, something proactive, and that's what we've done through this peace plan. If you don't like this plan, Madam Minister, give us your plan. Table it here right now.

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, the Education Improvement Commission talked about compromise, not capitulation. Secondly, the money in the education system today is more than it was in 1995 and 1996. In 1995 and 1996, it was \$12.9 billion; today it is \$13.5 billion.

Secondly, today, as we speak, there are thousands of teachers who are—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, come to order, please. Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member can talk all he wants about trying to buy peace. It is not about buying peace; it is about putting forward quality reforms that will help us get to better schools, because that's what parents want. We can try to buy off the union, as the honourable member is recommending. I would prefer to sit down with our education partners, as we are, to find out solutions that will work. I know the honourable member thinks he can wave a magic wand and—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you know what is happening out there. Parents are in absolute dismay, if not disgust, at what has been happening inside our high schools. They want solutions; they don't want politics. They want all of us to work together to fix it. They are sick and tired and disgusted with the constant in-fighting and bickering.

We've done something that is, admittedly, out of character with opposition parties. We've put forward a substantive policy proposal. We think the matter is so important that we put something forward, we've tendered it to you, we've made it available to the public. It has been well received in virtually every quarter except by you and your government, Madam Minister.

If you, for some reason, feel that our plan has some serious shortcomings, then let's talk about those. If you feel that it is beyond repair, beyond redemption, then you have one option alone: to put forward, before this House rises for the Christmas break, to introduce in this House a bill that will be acceptable to our teachers, to the

government, to parents, to students and the school board; a bill, in short, that puts our students first.

If you fail to do that, Madam Minister, that tells me and it tells our parents and it tells our students, most importantly, you have no genuine commitment to peace in our schools and you have no genuine commitment to putting Ontario students first.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member says that peace in our schools is the goal and the objective. I would like to remind the honourable member that when we did have peace in our schools, we had declining standards. When we did have so-called peace, this magical period that the opposition likes to talk about, some magical time when there was peace in our schools, we also had student achievement declining.

International tests are showing that the higher standards are starting to pay off. We actually do have—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Please, this is the last warning for the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale. One more and you'll be out for the day.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

The international tests are showing that our higher standards are starting to pay off. That's what parents want to see: better achievement for their students.

Secondly, yes, parents are frustrated. Why are they frustrated? Because some teachers are choosing to take away extracurricular activities from their kids. That is wrong; that is not supportable. Parents have objected to that, and we are going to continue to work with the teacher unions—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. New question.

MEAT INSPECTION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Do you think your government is doing enough to stop the operation of illegal slaughterhouses in Ontario and to stop meat that is slaughtered in filthy and unhygienic conditions from being sold in Ontario restaurants and in some food stores?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The Minister of Agriculture will be able to answer that question.

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Thanks very much to the member opposite for the question. The illegal meat trade is a problem and we are concerned about it. Our ministry is working hard to track down any offenders and lay the appropriate charge. Making sure that food is safe is a top priority for our ministry.

Here in Ontario we have one of the best food systems in the world. Unfortunately, some have chosen to live outside the system. I want to stress to the member that we are taking all allegations of selling uninspected meat very seriously. We have a highly trained and specialized enforcement team that responds to these calls. The alleged

illegal plants monitored in the Toronto Star story today are currently under investigation.

Mr Hampton: We saw the Ministry of the Environment dramatically cut back on the number of inspectors who were out there inspecting water treatment facilities and ensuring that water treatment facilities were operating properly. The public probably doesn't know that the Ministry of Agriculture reduced by half the number of inspectors who should be out there making sure that illegal slaughterhouses can't operate. You say you're concerned. The fact of the matter is, the only thing you've done about this is reduce the number of inspectors who should be out there protecting the health and safety of Ontario people. That's all you've done.

The problem just in one region, in York region outside this city, is such that one official says there are more than 20 illegal slaughterhouses there. That is, as we know, more a suburban neighbourhood now than a farm area. We know that there have been a number of grocery stores that have been convicted of selling illegal meat since 1997.

What are you doing, other than cutting the number of inspectors who are supposed to be out there ensuring that illegal slaughterhouses don't operate? What are you doing other than cutting the protection of health and safety?

Hon Mr Hardeman: In the past year, we've moved the focus of our investigative resources on to food safety issues rather than fraud investigation and internal human resources matters. However, the number of enforcement officers dedicated to food safety and illegal issues has not decreased.

We also want to say that we have reorganized our investigative branch in order to increase efficiency and improve effectiveness. We've consolidated important resources with the Ministry of Natural Resources. Incidentally, those changes have paid off. In the eight months since the partnership was formed, 62 charges have been laid, considerably more than over the same period last year. Of that number, there have already been 18 convictions, with over 40 court cases still coming out between now and January. This is more convictions for selling uninspected meat than the previous three years combined. We are concerned about food safety and we are working to make sure that we eliminate—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: All I can say for this minister is that he's changed his line a little bit. When this issue was first raised in the media, his response was, "Well, there are fewer slaughterhouses in Ontario. Therefore, there's not much of a problem."

1430

The reality is that yes, there are fewer slaughterhouses that are operating legally; there are more slaughterhouses that are now operating illegally. The reason they're able to do so is because you've cut the number of inspectors who are out there dedicated to shutting down the illegal slaughterhouses and you've cut the number of inspectors

overall. That's what is happening. Public health officials acknowledge that illegal meat in the thousands of kilograms is being sold in restaurants and small grocery stores across the greater Toronto area, never mind the rest of Ontario. Everybody else out there knows about the problem. The only thing you've done about it is cut the number of meat inspectors overall and cut the number of inspectors who are supposed to be dealing with illegal abattoirs as well.

Minister, will it take another Walkerton before your government understands that your government, all governments, has a job to do in protecting the health and safety of our citizens and that the private sector isn't going to do it for you? What are you going to do to address this problem now, before somebody becomes seriously ill?

Hon Mr Hardeman: I want to say that not only at present but in the term of the previous government, your government, and in the term of the Liberal government the Provincial Auditor said that we must change the way we are doing our meat inspection in Ontario. We are not getting good value for the inspection process. One of the things he suggested was that we make sure we direct our resources toward enforcement of the meat inspection and enforcement of the illegal slaughter.

We have taken that initiative. We have put the enforcement of illegal slaughter with the Ministry of Natural Resources to make sure we put those resources toward that activity. It is working, and that's why we have laid such a large number of charges and that is why we have a large number of convictions, because the system as we have changed it is working better.

EDUCATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I can't hear you.

Mr Marchese: I know, but you will.

Minister, in response to an earlier question on this issue of extracurricular activities, you said parents really want better schools, a stronger curriculum and testing of teachers. I think I agree with you that a lot of parents want that. But they also want extracurricular activities. And in your answer you made it appear like they weren't so important.

I have to tell you, one former Scarborough student was very active in extracurricular activities. In fact, he played golf, track and field, did gymnastics, current affairs and was involved in editing the high school yearbook. In the yearbook message this young man noted that a school is more than bricks and mortar, that you need school spirit to make education rewarding for students, and if you can't provide those activities, in his view you have failed.

Minister, what do you have to say to this student who said, "Until we find the true experience in school spirit we will have failed"? What's your answer to that comment?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): First of all, I would agree with the honourable member that extracurricular activities are an incredibly important service for our students. They can open up opportunities for students; they allow them to have post-secondary opportunities they might not have had. They're an extremely important service. The majority of teachers see providing extracurricular activities as part of their job and they go out of their way to do that for their students on a regular basis. Even in Durham today we have teachers performing extracurricular activities.

Unfortunately, we also know that there are some teachers who are choosing to work to rule. We need a solution to that. We're meeting with our education partners to find a solution to that. Adding more money in from taxpayers yet again for no added benefits or asking our students to increase their workload so teachers can decrease their workload is not the solution. I appreciate the sentiment the honourable Leader of the Opposition has put forward that solution on. We are considering the recommendations of the union and all of our other education partners about how to better resolve this issue for our students.

Mr Marchese: I just wanted to identify that student. He is now the Solicitor General, David Tsubouchi. He was the editor of that paper and was actively involved in those school activities. I happen to agree with him, that we need them. He knew then it was very important and he knows today that it's very important. The fact that you blame teachers for—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: I know you can't recognize him. He's a bit shady here because of the picture. But, Minister, your attack on the teachers as the ones who are to blame for not providing the extracurricular activities is wrong. Most teachers and most parents recognize that Bill 74 has caused this problem, and you are the author of that bill, not the teachers. I remind you that 75% of the schools are not providing those extracurricular activities. You can rant—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Seventy-five per cent, Minister. That means we've got a serious problem in our schools. What we need is for you to seriously sit down with the federations. I know you said, "We're meeting with them; we're listening to them." I don't believe you. I just don't believe you are seriously taking their suggestions or that you are meeting with Earl Manners, who has urgently said, "We've got to meet because we think we have a solution." I think they ought to be at the table when they find solutions to these questions. I need to know from you, what solutions have they put forth that you are considering that will solve this question?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I should have invited the honourable member from across the way to the meeting I had this morning with a number of the affiliates. It was a very productive meeting, a very good meeting. Many of those meetings have been very helpful. We are looking at a number of issues that they themselves agree need to be

addressed. The government agrees with them, and we are looking at those solutions for a number of problems.

But as the honourable member will know, we very carefully set a classroom standard for teachers that reflects the workload that teachers across the country—and again, this is only the secondary. The elementary teachers in this province already work more than teachers across the country and provide extracurricular activities, I should add. But we set a workload of four hours and 10 minutes of time in the classroom. It's a reasonable standard. We gave boards and unions the flexibility to implement that in a way that would support the teacher who does extracurricular, because as the honourable member knows, not all teachers did extracurricular before. They could have chosen to—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up. New question.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I want to again talk to the Minister of Education about the need to resolve the problems in the schools. I want to commend the Minister of Finance for apparently giving some advice to the Minister of Education, because we need cooler heads to prevail here.

Minister, you're saying to us today that you want to see teachers teach a certain amount. You're saying to us today that you don't want to put out the extra money if this plan fails. But in some schools right now you've got teachers teaching five hours in the classroom plus another five hours in their other duties; you've got some at your four hours and 10 minutes and some at less. That's a result of your plan initiated 105 days ago, and what it's done is, in 70 out of 72 school boards that last year had extracurricular activities, most of them haven't got them this year.

That's your creation, but here today and in the next three days there's something you can do about it. You can give back extracurricular activities to the students in Durham who were demonstrating outside these windows less than two weeks ago, so things must not all be fine in the region of Durham. Minister, I want you to speak to them directly now. Will you agree to our peace plan and will you put students first?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, as I said, the reason we are having a better curriculum and improving that curriculum is so that students learn and know what they need. The reason we are setting higher standards, including time in the classroom, the reason we are having standardized tests, the reason we are bringing in teacher testing, the reason we are doing all of these things, the reason we are putting more money in the classroom is because we are putting the students first. The goal is improved student achievement. That is the goal of this government. That is what I am continuing to work with our education partners to achieve.

Mr Kennedy: Hundreds of students came down here in the last number of weeks: Bronwyn Underhill, Jennifer

Coles from Humberside Collegiate with Katrina Galas; Jeff and Scot Brazeau and Daniel Greene came all the way from the Upper Canada board; Nicholas Graves from Etobicoke Collegiate; Marshall Sterling organizing students across the province, Caitlin Martella from Oakwood school. In each of the members' ridings in this House, students have pleaded to be heard.

Minister, you are going to hear shortly from the school trustees of this province, and they are going to tell you to sit down and find a solution. They are going to tell you that the solution that will work looks a lot like what's in the peace plan.

I think the people of this province have a right to know who you listen to when it comes to education. Will you listen to the students, to the parents, to John Henry, for example, the chair of the school board in Kitchener-Waterloo, a Conservative for 35 years who sits on your Advisory Panel on Special Education? He says this plan is worth doing. He says for you to sit down, not to wait, don't delay, put the kids first.

Minister, agree to this plan or produce a better one, and please do it today.

1440

Hon Mrs Ecker: I met with the trustee associations not that long ago, and it's interesting that they didn't put forward the OSSTF union plan. They put forward a number of options and recommendations, as have our education partners. I've met with the student trustees.

There are a number of issues we need to deal with. It's not simply an issue of trying to buy peace with one particular union or trying to buy extracurricular activities. It's really interesting that, on one hand, OSSTF says, "Don't pay teachers extra to do extracurricular activities." They've ruled that out. Now they're back, through the Liberal Party, asking for another \$150 million for the teachers' union. I don't think that is an appropriate solution.

We've already put forward additional money for more teachers, we've put forward additional monies to lessen the workload and we've put forward more money to help teachers provide extra support to students who need the remediation. We've taken those steps. We're prepared to continue to take those steps to make sure we have improved student achievement. But this plan, this particular suggestion, is not a solution.

ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORY

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Last week, one of our colleagues across the way, the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, asked a question about an animal health lab in my riding of Guelph-Wellington. The member alleged that funding for this lab was about to be cut and that the services were in jeopardy. As you know, this lab is a key part of animal health and food safety in Ontario and a major employer in my riding. Constituents are concerned.

Was the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London correct? Are the services and funding to the animal health

lab going to be cut, or was he engaging in irresponsible fearmongering?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I thank the member for Guelph-Wellington for the question. The member for Elgin-Middlesex-London was totally off the mark in his suggestion. As I indicated to him last week, funding for the animal health lab has been \$5 million a year since 1997, and there are no plans to reduce it.

But don't take my word for it. Listen to what the general manager of the university's lab service division, Dr Pat Collins, said last week in the Guelph Mercury, when asked about Mr Peters's assertions: "That information wasn't accurate. It's just plain wrong. I think he's completely off base. What we're getting back from OMAFRA is strong support for the program."

We're proud of our involvement with the animal health laboratory, and we'll continue with our strong support into the future.

Mrs Elliott: People in my riding are glad to know this, Minister, and I'm glad to have this clearly on the record.

The lab and the services have undergone some changes. I know we made some changes in 1997, when the lab became part of the partnership agreement with the University of Guelph. There has been consolidation of services with Guelph and with Kemptville College. For the record, Minister, how well is this lab working and what effects have these changes had?

Hon Mr Hardeman: By reviewing the operations in 1997 and again this year and by consolidating services, we've been able to improve services at the lab. For example, the lab has extended its services on weekdays and is now open on Saturdays, turnaround times have been shortened, the consistency of testing has improved and the scope and quality of tests available have been enhanced.

The animal health lab works closely with our ministry as a strong line of defence against disease outbreaks and food safety issues. It provides good services for about 40,000 cases and 700,000 tests a year. Along with our 35% increase in the OMAFRA veterinary science program, Ontario is well positioned and prepared to deal with the animal health issue.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Attorney General. He was here before, and I'm sure the minister, who enjoys answering questions—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): If we could just stop the clock for a quick moment, I'm sure we would be able to find him.

He is here. The member for St Paul's.

Mr Bryant: Minister, today an organization called Families Against Deadbeats spoke out against the Family Responsibility Office of your ministry. This organization assists thousands of families who are victims of deadbeat parents who won't make their support payments. FAI

said that you weren't listening to them, that you weren't even responding to their correspondence, that the collection rate of the Family Responsibility Office is abysmal and that you broke a promise made in 1995 and 1999 to crack down on deadbeat parents. So FAD and Ontario Liberals are calling upon you today to consider bringing in an investigative unit similar to the one brought in by the province of Alberta. This would get people out from behind their desks, hitting the pavement to track down and crack down on deadbeat parents.

Minister, will you agree to set up an investigative unit within your office?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): We are, of course, very concerned about the collection of monies owed to children and parents in the province of Ontario. I'm pleased the member raises the subject, which he hasn't raised and the opposition hasn't raised for weeks here. I'm pleased with the new-found interest they're showing today for the children and parents of the province of Ontario.

Let me update the opposition with respect to what the Family Responsibility Office has been doing these last several months. In fact, they are collecting record amounts of money for the children and parents of Ontario. The FRO workers are handling a large number of cases. They're working every day of the year to collect this money for the children and parents of the province, not just at Christmas but all during the year, collecting record amounts of money. I applaud those parents, the in excess of 60% of parents that are timely in terms of their support payments for their children in Ontario.

Mr Bryant: Minister, you say everything's all right. I say, don't take my word for it; listen to the families. Families Against Deadbeats represents hundreds of these thousands of families. Don't listen to me; listen to the Provincial Auditor, who says that 75% of the cases in your office are in arrears.

I understand that this isn't a headline-grabber, setting up an investigative agency. I understand this doesn't fit within your populist agenda. But you've got to understand that many, many children are going to get coal in their stockings from deadbeat Grinches because your ministry isn't doing anything about cracking down on deadbeat parents.

So if you won't agree to an investigative agency—and I don't understand why; it has worked in other provinces; you can't tell me that what we're doing in this province is enough—will you at least tell all those families and all the members in this House, who all get calls from the victims of deadbeat parents, why on earth you wouldn't set up such an agency for the sake of the children?

Hon Mr Flaherty: In fact, I'm informed that the work of the Alberta investigative unit is quite similar to the work done by the FRO enforcement staff in Ontario, so that'll leave that as it is.

Let me say this, though, about the Liberal work for the Family Responsibility Office. If you want to go back to 1995 and today, let's compare some performance.

Since 1995, we're collecting more money than previous governments. A record \$535 million was disbursed

to recipients the last fiscal year. That's about \$170 million more than the Liberal government collected in 1994 and 1995. During October alone, \$43.4 million was received and distributed to children and parents in Ontario. That's 24% more than your government collected in 1995. Sixty-one per cent of the cases are in substantial compliance for the children and parents in Ontario.

We've done a lot; there's much more to do. But thank goodness, for the parents and children in Ontario, they're not where they were under the Liberal government in 1995.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr David Young (Willowdale): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, over the last five years, Toronto and surrounding areas have experienced exponential economic growth. This growth has made Toronto a magnet for those coming to improve their lives and for those coming to invest in this province. This growth has also increased the use of our roads, our transit system and the human services in this city and beyond.

1450

Minister, we continue to see media stories that chronicle or suggest that Toronto will have difficulty in properly funding these services and programs, including the TTC and housing. These articles suggest that Toronto did not receive a fair shake, a fair deal under the local services realignment that took place three years ago. My question to you is just this: can you comment on how Toronto fared under the LSR three years ago?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for Willowdale for the question, and I'd be happy to comment on this. All the municipalities across the province have faced the same challenges of providing better, more efficient, safer services at a more accountable cost to the taxpayer—and indeed the results are in. Last year 85% of municipalities across this province were able to deliver better services, either at the same tax cost or a lower property tax cost to their taxpayers.

Indeed Mayor Lastman himself, in his inaugural address, boasted that, "As the first council of the new city of Toronto, we delivered a tax freeze for three consecutive years, we improved service, we cared for our less fortunate and we pulled six cities and seven governments into one." That's what he said.

But they've got to do more. They've got to continue to look for more efficient ways to deliver these services to the taxpayers. In addition to the \$560 million of tax room, when we took half of education off of property tax, they got a \$50-million grant from the province, they got \$200 million of interest-free loans. They have the ability to find those savings; they've got to deliver those better services for less. The tools are in place.

Mr Young: I've lived in this city for my entire life. I've been in the city when we've experienced boom times. I've been in the city when the streets were full,

when there was vitality, when there was confidence in our businesses. I've been in the city at other times when the streets of this city seemed as though they had cleared out because no one had reason to go downtown, because people weren't working in the same numbers as they are now.

These are great times that we live in, but what comes with that economic boom are also pressures and challenges. My question to you is just this: the TTC is a vital link in this city; it has been for many years and it undoubtedly will be in the future if this city is to continue to prosper. Millions of people use the TTC each and every day and rely upon it for social purposes and also in order to make a living.

I'm concerned that Toronto taxpayers will no longer be able to afford the sort of transit system that they deserve and that they expect. I'm aware that Toronto received \$829 million for TTC capital needs as part of the local services realignment, but given the concerns being expressed repeatedly at the city hall and in the media, my question to you is, can the city of Toronto adequately fund the TTC without resorting to tax increases?

Hon Mr Clement: Again, the honourable member is quite correct. There was an \$829-million payment to the TTC upon local services realignment that paid for the Sheppard subway, as well as other capital needs of the TTC. Yet we have Rick Ducharme, who's the chair of the TTC, the general manager, saying that Toronto taxpayers are going to be required to provide for more capital needs of the TTC in the near future through a tax hike.

I say to Mr Ducharme and to the city of Toronto, there's only one taxpayer. Get your financial house in order. Then and only then do you have the right or the obligation to consult with your taxpayers on whether a tax hike is necessary or desirable. Indeed, the results are that there is more work to be done.

I heard recently of \$35 million worth of parking ticket revenues that were lost in the past five years due to administrative errors. There is more work to be done. If Toronto can't keep its financial books in order, then I guess that the city of Toronto taxpayers are on the hook for a tax increase. But it shouldn't come to that.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. The federal government has indicated that they are going to make available home heating tax rebates of from \$125 to \$250 to people who qualify for the GST tax credit.

We know that home heating costs are going up by \$500 at least this year, so that amount of money won't cover the full increase in costs. But for someone who is forced to rely on social assistance in Ontario, it may well mean the difference between having heat in their home and not having heat in a very cold winter. We know your government took away from social assistance recipients in Ontario the national child tax benefit. I'm asking you

today for a guarantee that your government will not take away the home heating rebate from citizens in Ontario forced to rely on social assistance. I'm asking you to guarantee today that people who have to rely on social assistance in Ontario will be allowed to keep that home heating rebate when it arrives. Will you guarantee that?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Yes. We don't claw back GST rebates. But I understand in the federal government's pre-election budget the Minister of Finance, Paul Martin, came forward with a plan to use some of the windfall tax revenues the federal government has obtained because their tax on home heating fuel and on gasoline goes up when the price goes up. So they had a windfall of tax revenue because of the increases in energy costs, and as such are going to give some of that back through the GST tax credit. We don't take back the GST tax credit—it is allowed to be kept by those on social assistance in the province of Ontario—and we have no plan for changing that.

Mr Hampton: I'm glad to hear you're not going to try to take back that rebate for heating fuel.

I want to go back to the national child tax benefit. We've seen two reports now in the last two weeks which indicate that poverty among children is increasing in Ontario, that despite all your talk and bluster about an economic boom, the number of children who are living in poverty in Ontario is increasing. That was confirmed last week by the National Council of Welfare and by Campaign 2000.

If you're prepared to allow people to receive the home heating tax rebate, will you allow those families and children living in poverty who have to rely upon social assistance to receive the national child tax benefit as well?

Hon Mr Baird: I'll first look at the National Council of Welfare's report. It showed since 1995 in Ontario poverty rates are going down. It showed that for Ontario families since 1995 poverty is going down. It showed for Ontario children since 1995 poverty is going down. These were based on 1998 figures. Since 1998 we've seen literally hundreds of thousands of net new jobs created in Ontario. Since 1998 we've seen literally hundreds of thousands of people escape the welfare system, so I'm enthusiastic and excited to see this report based on year 2000 numbers.

The member opposite will be surprised to learn there are two tax benefits. The national child tax benefit which the member refers to is not taken back from social assistance recipients. The national child benefit supplement is, because it's there to help promote attachment to the labour force. That's the way the whole program was designed. The Conservative government in Ontario and all 100 Liberal MPs in Ottawa said that was the way to go, that to promote attachment to the labour force was a good public policy initiative. That policy, combined with the Ontario child care supplement for working families, has given a real benefit to the working poor, people who

have been left behind. We do a lot for people on social assistance. We've got to do more to help those with low and modest incomes, the real heroes and champions.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Labour. On December 1 my colleague from Hamilton West and I met with about 30 injured workers from National Steel Car in Hamilton. That group represents approximately 150 injured workers who now work for that company.

Minister, as of today almost 100 of those workers have been laid off while injured because of the loopholes that exist in legislation, particularly Bill 99 and the changes that have occurred. Many of these are workers who have a long history there; many of these are workers who have a permanent disability as a result of simply going to work in the morning and then coming home not in the same condition, obviously because of an injury that happened to them while they were trying to earn a living and take care of their families.

People are being laid off out of seniority. The company is using loopholes that are in the legislation. They will call workers back for one shift or two shifts of modified work and then eliminate that position and lay these workers off, forcing them on to UI and in some cases on to welfare after that.

It's a very desperate situation. As I said, 100 out of the 150 workers who are injured have been laid off by the company. They feel abandoned by the company; they feel abandoned by this government; they feel abandoned by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board in this province. They have come here looking for your help, looking for the help of the government of Ontario in trying to remedy this wrong. On behalf of the workers who are represented and who are behind me, Minister, will you commit today to reviewing this case and intervening, if necessary, with both the company and the WSIB to right the wrong and give these workers the justice they deserve?

1500

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I will certainly commit to meeting with you or them, if that's what you'd like to do, to review the situation.

Mr Agostino: I appreciate that because it's a non-partisan issue; it's one that's important. Clearly, it's important to the workers.

These workers have been denied opportunities. As you know, under the previous legislation they were entitled to vocational rehabilitation if they had a permanent disability. Under current legislation, they're only entitled to some form of assistance after they've been laid off for 13 weeks. In one case, a worker who's been laid off since the spring of this year has not yet received one bit of assistance from any market, labour or re-entry program.

Minister, clearly we need to relook at the changes that have occurred in compensation. We need to look at the changes that occurred under Bill 99, and we need to look

collectively at programs in this House that are going to help injured workers, are going to help these people get back into the workforce, get back into some type of modified work, but also stop the exploitation and the abuse of injured workers by companies who believe the legislation allows them to take advantage of these workers and deny them justice.

I appreciate the offer to review it. Minister, the workers are here today. Would you take some time after question period and meet with me and the workers so that you can see them and hear first-hand from them some of their experiences in dealing with the company and with the WSIB?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Certainly.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): My question is for the Solicitor General. Minister, road safety in Kitchener Centre is a very important issue, and I believe it is equally as important to the rest of the people in Ontario. In 1995, we launched the comprehensive road safety plan to give police the tools they needed to make the roads safer. We took a number of other initiatives since then: the Sergeant Rick McDonald Act, which increased the penalties for criminals who take reckless flight from police; the creation of five regional traffic management units; and since 1998 we have allowed municipalities to designate community safety zones in an area where safety is of particular concern, like schools. However, our road safety is still a concern in Ontario. As we enter the Christmas holidays, I wonder if you could tell us, and the people of Kitchener Centre in particular, how our government is addressing the issue of safety when it comes to driving on our roads.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for the question. Last Thursday, I had the opportunity to visit a RIDE spot-check with Toronto Police Chief Fantino, Superintendent Gary Grant and Staff Inspector Ron Ralph. The location of the RIDE program was the location where two elderly people were killed last year by a drunk driver. This gave us an opportunity to reinforce the message of zero tolerance for drunk driving and also to recognize the commitment that Toronto Police services have toward the RIDE program.

Mr Wettlaufer: My supp is also for the Solicitor General. Last Friday, I lost a good friend and the people of Ontario also lost a good friend in Mr Ted Thornley, the president of the Police Association of Ontario. On a personal level, I feel a great sense of loss and sorrow in his passing. I was honoured and privileged to have known Ted as a friend and, as well, on a professional level. Ted dedicated his life to making Ontario a better place in which to live. His commitment to making our communities safer was a bright guiding light for us to follow. His dedication has been and will always be an inspiration to all of us. He joined our local police service in 1973 and, as a constable, became involved with the

Police Association of Ontario the following year. He became an association board member in 1978 and president in 1988, a post he occupied until his death. Our community will miss Ted Thornley; I personally will miss Ted.

Minister, you worked with Ted, the Waterloo Regional Police Association and the Police Association of Ontario in his efforts to make the streets of our province safer. As well, you worked with him to make the job of police officers a safer one across Ontario. You had some experiences working with him and I wonder if you could share some of those experiences with us now.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: On behalf of all Ontarians, I'd like to express our condolences to the Thornley family, Ted's wife, Karen, his two daughters, Vicki and Kerri, and their son Jamie, and the entire policing community for the passing of one of the most respected police officers in the province of Ontario.

It was my pleasure to work with Ted on a number of issues. Two things I was always impressed with from Ted were his two loves: one was his family, but also his love of his job. He dedicated his job to the police officers in the street, making conditions better for them. The one thing about Ted that you appreciate—and I know the former Solicitor General, Bob Runciman, will—was that Ted always had a great love for life and a great sense of humour. No matter how tough the meetings were, he always managed to bring a smile to people's faces.

Tomorrow I'll be attending a service for a man who not only made a positive impact on policing in Ontario but set standards for others to follow. In attending, I'll bring to the family, on behalf of this Legislature and the people of Ontario, condolences and thanks for the contribution that Ted Thornley made in making Ontario a better place to live.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): My question is for the Minister of Health. Lately you have been making and remaking funding announcements with respect to health care funding to hospitals to face the increasing health care needs. However, I want to bring to your attention a particular case, a constituent of mine, Mrs Maria Ramundi. Maria Ramundi, after breast cancer surgery, has developed a condition called lymphedema. Lymphedema, as I'm sure you know, if it goes untreated, can develop into a situation where the swelling can cause deformity and enlarged, disfigured limbs.

Maria Ramundi has to travel on a daily basis to Scarborough General Hospital to receive treatment for two hours each day. It's the distance, going from the west end of the city to Scarborough General. She does not drive, it is wintertime, and her husband does not drive due to a heart condition. She receives two hours of treatment with a machine called a lymph press extremity pump.

The doctor at the hospital tells me that this particular machine is used by a team which receives patients from not only Scarborough, Toronto and the GTA, but from as far as Timmins, Kingston and Cambridge as well.

I'm asking you, for the sake of the health of my constituent and many others in the same situation, what will you do to assist Mrs Ramundi by providing care in the hospital close to where she lives in the west end of the city?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In response to the question from the member, as the member knows, we have been investing in the hospitals in the province of Ontario. In fact, this year we have committed approximately \$8.3 billion, an increase of about \$850 million from last year, because our government has committed to ensure that our hospitals today are centres of excellence. We are renovating, we are expanding the hospitals within the province, in order that they can provide more and better services closer to home.

We will move forward with that plan of action. We have added and are adding more cardiac centres, more cancer centres, more dialysis centres, all with the purpose of making sure that people in this province no longer have to drive the distances they have in the past, and that they can get the services closer to home. We will continue to do that with the additional funding we're making available.

Mr Sergio: I would think that you would take it upon yourself and your government, then—if you continue to provide so many more millions of dollars—to provide the machine in the northwest area of the city, where people with the same condition as Mrs Ramundi can access that care without travelling miles and miles from one end of the city to the other at this particular time of the year.

I'm asking you, Madam Minister, on behalf of Mrs Ramundi and many others with the same condition, since the only option left to Mrs Ramundi is to rent a machine at a cost of \$20 a day or \$600 a month, will you absorb the cost of renting the machine, or will you make the commitment here today to Mrs Ramundi that indeed you will provide the funding to have a machine at the Humber River Regional Hospital in the west end of the city?

1510

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I indicated in my response to the member's first question, it has been the objective of our government to ensure that we do everything possible to bring all services closer to home. It was the commitment that we undertook in 1995. We have been increasing health spending each and every year, from \$17.6 billion to well in excess of \$22 billion this year.

As many of the members know in this House, we now have dialysis services throughout Ontario where there were none before. We will continue to make sure that as time goes on, all of the services are delivered as close as they possibly can be. We're constructing three new cardiac centres at the present time. We have five new cancer centres that are being expanded. We've introduced the Healthy Babies program. I made an announcement this morning about a new infant screening program for hearing purposes, and every newborn will be screened.

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE POLICY

Mr Brian Coburn (Ottawa-Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Weekend reports in the media describe what some are calling a staggering increase in the number of refugee claimants coming into Canada, specifically from border crossings in southern Ontario. For instance, the border crossing in Niagara Falls and Fort Erie in 1998 had 1,536 refugee claims. This year that number could reach more than 10,000.

Our immigrants contribute greatly to our economy and our culture and help make this province truly the best place to live in North America. But how are we coping with this increased number of refugee claimants?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member for Ottawa-Orléans for the question. Ontario welcomes all new Ontarians to its borders, whether they come from another country or from another province. But it's important to recognize that although new Canadians coming to Ontario consist of about 55% of all new Canadians, we only receive 40% of the funds from the federal government for settlement services. Of course, this becomes a substantial problem. If you think about the number of new Ontarians we get in the province, we should be receiving about \$134 million from the federal government; as opposed to that, we receive about \$100 million. So it's really important that Ontario receive its fair share of the settlement dollars from the federal government, and we're looking forward to being able to work with the federal government to get our fair share.

With that money, we invest in newcomer settlement programs which make sure that newcomers are settled as quickly as they can be into Ontario. We also invest in cultural interpreter programs to make sure that violence against women is minimized, and we help new immigrants—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

PETITIONS

RAMSEY INDUSTRIAL ROAD

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have petitions signed by well over 6,000 people, most of them northerners, but not all. I want to thank my colleague the member for Sudbury, Rick Bartolucci, the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North, Mike Gravelle, and the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane, David Ramsey, for assisting with this petition. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ramsey industrial road from Sultan to Highway 144 is used by thousands of people annually;

"Whereas the Ramsey industrial road is a treacherous gravel road;

"Whereas thousands of people must use this road to travel for business, medical and personal reasons;

"Whereas the economic development of the area is strangled by the lack of a paved highway;

"Whereas the communities of Manitouwadge, White River, Hornepayne, Dubreuilville and Wawa all support the efforts made by Chapleau Mayor Earle J. Freeborn to have this road upgraded;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and the Ontario government to immediately approve the paving and upgrading of the Ramsey industrial road to a provincial highway."

This petition is signed by people in Sudbury, Thunder Bay and all communities in-between.

CAMPING FEES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Dryden district Ministry of Natural Resources is proposing to relinquish administration of traditional public boat launching and camping sites to the private sector,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Natural Resources be given sufficient funding to carry out its fiduciary duty to the people of this area and this province and continue to administer over these sites and cease efforts to obtain private sector proposals that may lead to" more "user fees."

I have affixed my signature to this petition as well.

ACCESS TO MEDICAL PROFESSION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I have a petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the report of the McKendry commission, released by the Ontario Ministry of Health in December 1999, finds that Ontario is facing a shortage of over 1,000 physicians; and

"Whereas at least 286 international medical graduates in Ontario have successfully completed the Medical Council of Canada evaluating exam, demonstrating competence in clinical knowledge; and

"Whereas the number of Ministry of Health funded post-graduate positions in "pool B" (that is, international medical graduates) has been reduced from 289 to 81 since 1994; and

"Whereas the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine has indicated that they have the capacity to absorb an increase in the number of entry-level post-graduate positions, as long as sufficient resources are provided to support the increase; and

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario unanimously passed private member's resolution number 6 on November 25, 1999, which held that the government of Ontario should implement a plan to improve access to

professions and trades for foreign-trained professionals"—I support that, actually;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care as follows:

"(a) to restore the number of Ministry of Health funded post-graduate positions for international medical graduates to at least 1994 levels;

"(b) to increase immediately the number of entry-level post-graduate training positions to the full capacity of the Ontario faculties of medicine;

"(c) to make the increased entry-level post-graduate positions directly available to international medical graduates who have successfully completed the requisite examinations;

"(d) to develop a plan to identify alternative funding mechanisms that will allow more adequate access for international physicians to the health care system in Ontario; and

"(e) to appoint a committee, with representation from the international medical graduate community, to review and dismantle the barriers which have been established to prevent international physicians from gaining fair access to licensure and practice" in Ontario's health care system.

I am pleased to sign this petition on their behalf, and I'll be giving it to Geoff.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to the United States to receive medical attention;

"Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as macular degeneration, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are not covered by OHIP;

"Whereas many residents of St Catharines and other communities in Ontario are unable to find a family doctor as a result of the growing family doctor shortage we have experienced during the tenure of the Harris government;

"Whereas many assistive devices that could aid patients in Ontario are not eligible for funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health;

"Whereas community care access centres have inadequate funding to carry out their responsibilities for long-term and home care;

"Whereas the Harris government has now spent over \$185 million on blatantly partisan government advertising in the form of glossy brochures and television and radio ads;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Harris government to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising and instead to invest this money in health care in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature, as I am in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed in this petition.

1520

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I am very proud today to present a series of petitions organized and forwarded to me by Megan Lynch, who is a grade 10 student at Orchard Park high school in Stoney Creek. I also want to say hi to her civics class because I understand they're attempting to be tied into this while the petition is being presented. I'm very pleased that Megan has taken this effort, and I'm proud to introduce the petition here to the Legislature.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is forcing teachers to volunteer in extracurricular activities, on top of teaching an extra half-course and teaching up to four classes a day; and

"Whereas teachers are already marking tests, taking exams, organizing projects and other assignments and preparing for graduation and field trips; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has left our teachers with no time for extracurricular activities at our schools; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has not solved any problems with Bill 74 but has instead created problems in schools throughout Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the government of Ontario take immediate action to repair the damage it has done to teachers and our education system through Bill 74."

As I am in agreement with the content of this petition, I am proud to add my name to those of the students, teachers and parents at Orchard Park high school who took the time and cared enough to generate this petition.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole," my esteemed colleague, "and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to be used on vintage automobiles."

I pass this on to Adam, who will present it.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'd like to present this 2,000-name petition. It's 2,000 of the 69,000 people who have signed this petition to the Ontario Legislature. It deals with northerners demanding the Harris government eliminate health care apartheid.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location; and

"Whereas a recently released Oracle research poll confirms that 92% of Ontarian support equals health travel funding;

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province;

"Whereas we support the efforts of OSECC, (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Loughheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

Our page Rosemary Wilson, from Chatham-Kent Essex, will bring it to the table. I thank her for that as well as the people who signed this petition.

FRAIS DE TRANSPORT AUX FINS MÉDICALES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition signed by a number of people, this time from the town of Hearst, and it reads as follows:

« Pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Les gens du nord exigent que le gouvernement Harris mette fin à l'apartheid en matière de soins de santé.

« Attendu que, d'une part, le programme de subventions accordées aux résidents du nord de l'Ontario pour frais de transport à des fins médicales offre un remboursement partiel au taux de 30,4 cents », pas si pire, « par kilomètre à aller seulement, à l'intention des personnes atteintes de cancer, et que, d'autre part, la politique de déplacement pour les gens du sud de l'Ontario rembourse en entier les coûts de transport, de

repas, et d'hébergement ; » pas trop pire, les deux cette fois-là,

« Attendu qu'une tumeur cancéreuse ne connaît aucune politique de transport pour les soins de santé ni de région géographique ;

« Attendu qu'un sondage de recherche Oracle publié récemment confirme que 92 % des Ontariens appuient un financement égal de transport à des fins médicales ;

« Attendu que les résidents du nord de l'Ontario paient le même montant d'impôts et ont droit au même accès aux soins de santé, ainsi qu'à tous les services du gouvernement et à tous les droits de la personne inhérents que les autres résidents de la province ;

« Attendu que nous souhaitons les efforts de l'OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), une association récemment fondée par Gerry Loughheed Jr, ancien président de Action Cancer Ontario, région du nord-est, afin de redresser cette injustice envers les personnes du nord de l'Ontario qui doivent se déplacer pour recevoir des traitements anticancéreux ;

« En conséquence, il est résolu que les soussignés exigent que le gouvernement Mike Harris propose immédiatement de financer en entier les frais de transport à l'intention des résidents du nord de l'Ontario atteints de cancer et mette fin à l'apartheid qui existe présentement dans la province de l'Ontario en matière de soins de santé. »

Je signe cette pétition avec plaisir.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition signed by hundreds of people from the Espanola area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Espanola area services a population of approximately 12,000 people and government statistics project a population growth of people over 75 to reach an estimated 336 by the year 2003;

"Whereas the long-term formula for the distribution of long-term-care beds would indicate a need for between 59 and 76 beds by the year 2003;

"Whereas just 30 long-term-care beds exist in the Espanola area with the result that a lengthy waiting list already exists and people are being placed in long-term-care facilities far distant from their home communities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario government to immediately approve a proposal by the Espanola General Hospital, supported by the Algoma, Cochrane, Manitoulin and Sudbury District Health Units, for an additional 34 long-term-care beds in Espanola."

I'll affix my signature, and I will give the petition to Jared Baker from Oshawa.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition this time from the town of Smooth Rock Falls, and it reads as follows:

"Petition to the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;

"Whereas a recently released Oracle research poll confirms that 92% of Ontarians support equal health travel funding;

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province; and

"Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Loughheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

I sign that petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BALANCED BUDGETS FOR BRIGHTER FUTURES ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR DES BUDGETS ÉQUILIBRÉS POUR UN AVENIR MEILLEUR

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 14, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 152, An Act to implement the 2000 Budget to establish a made-in-Ontario tax system and to amend various Acts / *Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 2000 en vue de créer un régime fiscal propre à l'Ontario et à modifier diverses lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): The member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It's my pleasure to engage in debate on Bill 152, commonly known as the budget bill. I would like to give some comments in regard to this bill and the impacts it has on people in my riding and on the people of Ontario.

The Ontario economy, as does this budget, seems to be doing the appropriate things in a macro way because the economy is buoyant. The economy is certainly riding the coattails of the American economy, and we're able to export all kinds of manufactured goods, especially auto

parts, to the United States. So we're doing quite well here in Ontario in a macro way.

But in a micro way there are some very serious impacts being felt by the people of Ontario that this government is not addressing. I thought this government had a great opportunity to address some of these issues, given the huge windfall that this government is seeing in tax revenues.

1530

This government is collecting unprecedented numbers of taxes and all kinds of revenues from gaming. Many people have forgotten the fact that this government's venture into gaming has been very successful financially for the government coffers, the general treasury. It's estimated they're bringing in a million dollars a day from gaming revenues. We're trying to say perhaps some of those gaming revenues, the hundreds of millions they're taking in in gasoline tax, the hundreds of millions they're taking in in provincial sales tax, the millions they're taking in in land transfer tax, could be put back into providing for our basic needs in this province.

The paradox is that, as well as the economy is doing in a macro way and with all these revenues coming into the Ontario treasury, we see that the three basics as far as Ontarians are concerned are in a state of turmoil. The three basics I'm going to talk about are health care, education and housing.

Despite all these revenues that are coming in—unprecedented, record amounts of revenues—we still have a health care system that is under a great deal of stress. I talked to a young lady the other day who was admitted to Humber River hospital at the edge of my riding; it used to be in my riding. She had to wait five hours to see a doctor—five hours to see a doctor in a Toronto hospital. That type of waiting is very dangerous but it is very commonplace, certainly, in Toronto hospitals. The reason it's commonplace is that this government two or three years ago embarked on an ill-fated course in what they called the Health Services Restructuring Commission, where they said they were going to save all kinds of money, improve the health care system, by closing down 30 hospitals in this province and closing down 10 hospitals in the city of Toronto.

Well, it hasn't worked. That ill-fated hospital restructuring venture, the reckless venture this government took upon itself, is not only costing the taxpayers of Ontario extra millions of dollars to repair the damage but it's costing Ontarians good health care. There are still extremely long waiting lists for long-term-care facilities—two years, three years—and still long waiting periods for emergency services in hospitals. We've lost six emergency centres in Toronto where people used to go for emergency services. They've been closed. Their doors have been shut. So the questions I get asked are, "If the government has so much money, how come it can't reopen the hospital emergencies?" and "Why is it closing down Women's College Hospital emergency?"

That's the dichotomy of this budget and all these revenues that are coming in: they can't take care of basic

health care needs. We still have a crisis in emergencies. We still don't have enough beds. We still have people who go in for major operations who are told to go home two or three days after an operation and, when they get home, they can't get home care. You almost have to be dying to get any home care from this government. Yet, the government has so much money.

They were supposed to put in a home care system that was to replace all the hospitals they closed. They haven't done that. I have a wonderful hospital in the west end of Toronto, Northwestern hospital, and it's still empty. You wouldn't believe it; they wouldn't believe this in Sault Ste Marie: this hospital sits on 32 acres, a big, beautiful, modern building, empty, and it's being used as a television studio. That's what the hospital is being used for. The emergency doors are closed, the parking lot is empty, all those doctors or nurses are gone who knows where and people still have to line up to get basic emergency services at surrounding Toronto hospitals.

That hospital restructuring commission, as convened by the infamous Mr Sinclair, was a total failure and has cost us dearly in the health care system, cost us dearly in terms of our taxpayers' dollars.

If you look at our school systems, in the greater Toronto area, despite all these revenues, we still don't have adequate funding for our pupils' needs or program needs. The government works on the square-footage formula—so many children for every square foot—yet you can't get enough resource teachers or guidance teachers. Special education needs are not being met because the government's faulty formula is based on square footage. It's not based on the needs of a child, it's not based on the needs of a program. This government is basically neglecting the needs of students across this province. Our schools are in turmoil, cutting back programs, cutting back after-school programs. Our high schools have no after-school programs.

We in opposition have said, "Here's a peace plan. Put a little bit of the money you have in this budget surplus into hiring a few more teachers so you can get peace in our schools." This government rejects it. This budget bill rejects any attempt to bring peace and harmony and good, solid education practices and calm into our schools. They are saying no. People can't figure out why they reject our attempts or the attempts of parents to bring peace into the schools. Instead, they want turmoil and conflict.

The money is there. Ten years ago the money wasn't there. This government is now awash in money, as I said, from gasoline tax. They collect \$3 billion a year automatically, without doing any work. It comes into the coffers of this government. If they put some of that money back into our schools, put it into our hospitals—millions in gaming revenues. Where does that money go? We have no idea. The poor gamblers who sometimes lose every cent—hopefully some of that money would get back into our schools and hospitals. I don't know where it goes.

We have up to 70,000 people waiting for affordable housing in the city of Toronto, 70,000 people on the

waiting list. That's probably more people than live in all of Sault Ste Marie; I know it's bigger than Kingston. Seventy thousand adults are waiting for housing in the city of Toronto. These are mostly seniors who are now on a pension and can't afford to pay the high rents in Toronto. They are on a waiting list. They have to wait maybe five years to get a one-bedroom or bachelor apartment in the city.

At one time, government provided housing for seniors. This government has downloaded that responsibility on to municipal taxpayers, despite the fact that Crombie and the Who Does What commission and all the experts said you should never download social housing on to municipal taxpayers. This government has not listened to the experts and is now about to download this housing responsibility. The housing stock they're downloading needs hundreds of millions of dollars in repairs. Many of these buildings, whether they be in Regent Park or Jane-Woolner, whether they be in Etobicoke or in Rexdale, need new furnaces, need new water systems; they need to be upgraded to meet the fire code. The municipalities don't have the money to upgrade these downloaded social housing units they've been given. Many of the people who live in these apartments and homes are not going to have the best of conditions because the municipalities won't be able to retrofit them because the municipalities are facing a crunch with other downloads.

So we have those three basic needs: education, from the primary grades right through high school; our hospitals, whether it be emergency services or long-term-care facilities; and housing, especially housing for those in need, our seniors. This government is not investing its huge surplus in the right places. It is basically floundering around making an announcement every day about some program, yet the basic needs are not being met.

If you ask any parent, any teacher, any student in any school in Toronto, they'll tell you there is turmoil in the schools. There is not adequate funding to provide an adequate number of teachers, guidance counsellors, program administrators, people who give support programs to children with special needs. I was talking to a parent the other day in a school in my area where the caretaker has to take care of lunchroom supervision. The caretaker volunteers to take care of the kids at lunchtime because the teacher's aide who used to take care of the lunchtime supervision program was let go. So here we are in one of the wealthiest provinces and one of the wealthiest jurisdictions in the world and we can't even afford to hire someone to supervise kids at lunchtime.

1540

Children who have special education needs can't get assessments in our schools. They have to wait a year or two to get an assessment to get help. Never mind the help; they can't get the assessment done because in our schools many of our psychologists have been let go. Many of our schools in Toronto are missing librarians because of this government's faulty funding formula based on square footage and not on student needs.

We had so many opportunities. This budget was a great opportunity for this government to do something,

set something straight, and it has failed, as I said, because it has not met those three basic, essential services that the provincial government is in business for. There's a provincial government to provide good housing, good education and good health care. That's what it's here for. That is its *raison d'être*, yet it doesn't do that. It is failing miserably. If you ask any Ontarian in Timmins or the Beaches or Sault Ste Marie or North York, they'll tell you this government is failing in education, in health care and in housing—three essential services.

I'd also like to talk about some opportunities that were missed. As you know, all over this province people are going to be faced with exorbitant increases in the price of heating their homes. Natural gas prices are going up 42%. We see the price of diesel fuel for running an automobile or the price of gas at the pump also going way beyond a person's ability to pay.

As you know, the federal government has put in a rebate program to help people on fixed incomes meet the crunch that's coming this winter. I would think this government had a good opportunity to do something in terms of helping people who are on a fixed low income to meet these exorbitant increases in the price of fuel. They had that chance. They could have matched the federal contribution and really helped people in northern Ontario, helped people who have to drive long distances, helped truckers who are faced with the high cost of diesel and can't make a living. Yet there's not one word in this budget about helping seniors, people on fixed incomes, truckers who need a break on the cost of diesel fuel. There's no help for them. That's a missed opportunity, given the huge windfall this government has in tax revenues as referred to by our finance minister.

Another area where they could have helped is the whole area of property taxation. There are many seniors who have good pieces of property yet are cash-poor. They live in homes that they want to live in until their last days. The problem is that with the property taxation system of this province, these seniors on fixed incomes are taxed on virtual capital gains or unrealized capital gains. In other words, they have a home that may be assessed at \$400,000. That home will get a huge tax assessment and a subsequent huge tax bill. That senior may only make \$12,000 a year in pension. How can that senior afford to pay a 20% or 30% increase in property taxes? They can't do it. This budget could have given a break to seniors. It could have done something with the Ontario property tax credit. It could have helped people on fixed incomes, people with disabilities, to give them a real, direct rebate with all the revenues this government has coming in. It didn't do that.

This government could have given a break to people who renovate, repair or retrofit their homes. As you know, all over Ontario people are rolling up their sleeves and improving their homes. They're adding on rooms; they're fixing up garages or building garages. They are improving their property. But as you know, this government gives people who improve their property a higher tax assessment. Subsequently, they get penalized with a

higher property tax because they invested in their own homes. Bill 152 had an opportunity, maybe, to stop the taxation of people who improve their homes, stop the penalization if people improve their homes. Instead, it allows higher taxes to be thrust upon people who spent their own money adding that new kitchen, adding that new bathroom; in some cases even expanding their home. This government doesn't appreciate the hard work and investment people make in their homes. It could have given them a bit of a break on that, but it doesn't—another missed opportunity. Again, it's a budget that talks about the very healthy macroeconomy, but there are a lot of individuals in this province who are not benefiting.

There's another interesting proposal that's been made to this government, and they didn't pay heed to it. As you know, there is a home ownership program for first-time homebuyers. It's a savings plan where, if you put money aside, when you buy your first home you get a break on that as a first-time homebuyer.

Many people have said, "Why not also give that break to first-time homebuyers who buy resale homes?" Right now the provision just gives you an RSP home ownership contribution break if you buy a new home, but many people buy resale homes the first time. They are being penalized. They don't get that break, just because the home is resale. I hope that maybe in the next budget we'll get an attempt to at least treat people who buy resale homes the same way as first-time homebuyers who buy new homes. I don't know if you were aware of that, but I think that's an inequity that exists in this province. It's something the government could have addressed because, as I said, the government has the financial wherewithal to help homebuyers who are struggling to buy that first home.

I don't know what the average price of a home is in Sault Ste Marie, but in the greater Toronto area you essentially have to pay about \$250,000 for a first-time home. Even if they save \$50,000, it's a huge amount of money, a huge mortgage for a young couple or a young person to get, so they need every break they can get. Right now the government doesn't recognize the fact that there are people buying resale homes who should get a break also.

I would also like to mention that there are some very good suggestions made out there in the marketplace. For instance, a lot of plumbers, carpenters, electricians and general tile setters will tell you there's a shortage of qualified tradespeople in the greater Toronto area. A lot of tradespeople have told me and have written me and said, "Why wouldn't the government give a tax break to a professional, experienced bricklayer or a qualified, experienced plumber to have a young person come on as an apprentice so that the young person, after a year or two, can be a trained plumber or bricklayer?" Right now there's no inducement for that skilled, professional, veteran tradesperson to bring a young person on board because they say, "I just don't have any room to manoeuvre, as a small business person, with the taxes I

have to pay." Why not give that person a tax rebate if he or she brings on a young person to be trained to be a bricklayer? There's nothing wrong—in fact, it's a great way to make a living, as a carpenter, bricklayer or plumber, and people are dying for them all over southern Ontario. Yet there's no program for this government to help train and put apprentices into place to fill this growing demand. This government is not innovative enough. It's very static in its approach. It thinks very much in a myopic tunnel vision; it has no lateral vision whatsoever. It is too focused on looking down rather than looking ahead.

Those are some of the suggestions I've made. I just think the people of Ontario know full well that this government is awash in billions of dollars of surplus, that it should get its act together and put money back where it's most important: in our hospitals, in our schools and in building affordable housing, especially for our seniors. They have no excuses for not putting those programs into place, with all the money they have coming in from tax revenues.

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): The member spoke of energy issues as related to this particular act, and I know that if he had had the opportunity, given that the time for debate has been very much limited by this government, he would have talked a little bit about the deregulation of hydro. I find interesting what's now happening in Alberta. Alberta, as you know, did exactly what this provincial government did when it came to deregulating and privatizing Ontario Hydro, with the promise that we were all going to get cheaper hydro rates. We were going to be rolling in the dollars we were going to save by way of our hydro bills. We were looking, and salivating as we looked, at the savings we were going to get, and now we see in Alberta that the dream is nothing but a dream. It's a farce; it's not working. Consumers over there and, even more important, industry, people like Algoma Steel, people like Falconbridge and others, the big users of hydro in Alberta, are saying that because of deregulation, because of what the Alberta government did, which is the same thing we did in Ontario at the hands of Mike Harris, hydro rates in Alberta are going up 200% to 400%.

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I hope we don't see that in Ontario. But all indications are, in the early parts of our deregulated Ontario hydro market and the new privatized companies that are now split up into different parts, that we are starting to see the possibility of increased hydro rates in Ontario.

I want to stand in this House today, on December 18, 2000, to say what it means to users like Algoma Steel, Falconbridge, Abitibi and other large users in northern Ontario. If hydro rates were to go up, as we expect they will under this new deregulated market, it'll be disastrous for them economically. It's just another indication that the Conservatives' ideology does not work when it comes to actually making things work. In fact, we're going to be worse off. Just wait and see.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I was quite interested to listen to the member for Eglinton-Lawrence talk about the province being awash in surplus. He was also admitting to the booming economy but had some real problems admitting what created it.

I look back to the early 1990s, and I think he forgot what was happening in the States. There was a booming economy there in the early 1990s, and particularly as we moved into the mid-1990s, but nothing happened in Ontario. If he really looked, he would know what was going on. In the early 1990s, as we increased taxes under the NDP regime, revenue went down. You could see that each time taxes went up, revenue immediately went down. No question: with the cut in taxes, revenues in Ontario have indeed gone up.

I also look at why BC was doing well in the early 1990s but did disastrously in the late 1990s. It was certainly not related to the change going on in the US economy.

I think the member for Eglinton-Lawrence also forgot about the number of jobs lost in Ontario in the early 1990s. I don't think he remembers what was going on at that time.

The numbers on welfare escalated in the early 1990s and also escalated during their term in office in the late 1980s. Welfare numbers kept going up. Food bank activity skyrocketed in the late 1980s, and that was in boom times. If you want to relate a boom time to the American economy, that indeed would be the time to relate it to.

But have a look at the number of jobs created since 1995—some 830,000 net new jobs in Ontario—and over half a million people off welfare. That didn't happen coincidentally. That happened because of design, particularly through tax cuts in Ontario.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): My compliments to my colleague the member for Eglinton-Lawrence for pointing out to the House what is really wrong with this government at this time. We have an opportunity and, as the member for Eglinton-Lawrence has said, we are missing a golden opportunity during these booming economic times.

Instead, what we have seen with this government and the way they've kept going since they were elected in 1995 is that they keep saying they are on the right track, but they are completely on the wrong train.

We have seen—and this is from someone who is not from either side of the House, the Provincial Auditor—the scathing reports he released just a couple of weeks ago on the record of this government. It is absolutely terrible that we have a government—with all due respect, Mr Speaker—that is even worse than in the Bob Rae days. It is absolutely abysmal.

They have increased the debt to \$24 billion in this economic situation. Where are they giving the money? To the least needy. Instead of looking after the poor people, the most needy people, they are giving that money to those who don't need it.

Is this what the government wants to continue to do: attack the workers and the poor people in Ontario instead

of using this golden opportunity to say, "We have an opportunity to rebuild our health care system, our education" and really give a hand up to our students and seniors? They are the most needy in society. So my compliments to the member from Eglinton-Lawrence.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I am pleased to speak in response to the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. I am sure he listened with interest to the member for Northumberland. They're still claiming all the credit over there for the good times in Ontario; it's unbelievable.

We know that eventually, unhappily, it appears as though we are heading for some kind of recession again. Hopefully, people talk about it, economists talk about it in terms of, "Will there be a soft landing or will there be a hard landing?" Either way, that's part of the cycle of our system. We don't want to see a recession and I'm sure that the government is already looking at the trends and, hopefully, is planning ahead.

Once that starts to happen, it will be very interesting to see who they're going to put the blame on, because you can't take the credit for all the good times and then, when things go a bit in the dumps, blame it on somebody else—which is the trend for this government. Whenever we in the opposition raise any issues that are problematic, and there are many problems, they blame it on the federal government or the opposition or somebody else out there, but they're willing to take credit for all the good things that we have happening in our economy. So that's going to be very interesting to watch.

The member for Eglinton-Lawrence was talking about some of the impacts of the downloading, and specifically to the city of Toronto. Just look at public transportation itself. We just heard from an independent study—something that we knew all along—that they're going to need about \$200 million just to keep the congestion down and keep things as they are now. As far as I know, this is the only government in the western world that has pulled completely out of supplying money for public transportation. That's included with downloading of public housing, daycare, some welfare costs and public health. This is having a huge impact on the taxpayers of Toronto.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Colle: I appreciate the comments from all members on both sides of the House. I think it adds to the debate. Members from Timmins, Northumberland, York West and Member Churley, I really appreciate those comments—it's Toronto-Danforth. They've changed the name; Dennis Mills changes everything.

I just want to say that the principal thing here is that the indictment against this government can be seen in the streets of Toronto. Never in my 50 years in the city of Toronto have we ever seen people sleeping on the streets as we have in the year 2000. As poor as Toronto was in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, even during the recession of the late 1980s, we didn't have this homelessness problem.

How can this government stand up and say things are so great in this province, that they've done so much, when they can't even create basic housing for our most

vulnerable? We have never had people sleeping on grates, on sidewalks, beside buildings day after day after day—with this government in power.

That's what I've been talking about. Despite the abundance of tax revenues this government gets in every day, by the barrelful, it can't deal with the most essential needs of this province. The proof is in the streets of this city. Wherever you go—on Bloor Street, on Danforth, Etobicoke, North York—there are people sleeping in the streets, and this government pretends everything is OK and says tax cuts are great.

If tax cuts were really doing the job, they would do something about our homeless who are suffering in the streets of this city and other cities in the province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Churley: I'd like consent to share my time with the member from Timmins-James Bay.

The Acting Speaker: Consent? Agreed.

Ms Churley: Just following up on the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, he was talking about poverty. It's not just in the city of Toronto, but of course it's probably more of a problem here than in any other centres in Ontario because it's such a large urban centre with services.

It's quite interesting that even in the bad economic times when the NDP was in government—of course, the Tory government likes to say it was all the NDP's fault. We all know that—

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): You tried to spend your way out of the recession.

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Ms Churley: That's what they are saying, but you know what? We weren't spending our way out of a recession; we were trying to keep people afloat during the worst recession since the 1930s. To some extent we succeeded in that, and I'm proud of that fact. I think it's absolutely shocking and unacceptable that in booming economic times here in Ontario we see more people sleeping on the streets than when we were in government and we were in a recession. That's because, as you will recall, we made the decision to make sure the supports were there for the poorest and the most disadvantaged in our society.

Let me talk to you about poverty for a few minutes, Mr Speaker, because I know it's something you are really concerned about and have been since you were elected to this House in 1990. It's something that is troubling us all deeply these days, and it is particularly troubling, let me say again, in really good economic times in Ontario.

Contrary to what the Minister of Community and Social Services said today in response to a question about child poverty from Howard Hampton, the leader of the NDP, Ontario happened to be one of only two provinces in all of Canada where poor families fell below the poverty line since 1996. We're talking about good economic times, and the minister and this government have no answer to the problem. The depth of poverty grew since 1996 here in Ontario. Ontario and Newfoundland were the only provinces in Canada that in good economic

times—and we all know there have been difficulties in Newfoundland because of the disappearance of the codfish. As people know, I hail from Newfoundland and have a pretty clear understanding of what happened there and the struggles they were dealing with. But here in Ontario, in such good economic times, it's an absolute disgrace and unacceptable that people would fall below the poverty line at this time in our history.

We have a government whose Premier has been playing Santa Claus lately. He said he would make sure that each child in Ontario would get a gift. Then we found out that indeed what the Premier was doing, when people called his office, was referring people to existing charities that have been in this business for years. They are already stretched to the limit. They don't have enough toys to give to every family. The Premier is ripping the gift tags off these gifts and pretending they are coming from him. That's not the answer to the problem.

The tax cuts, and research shows this, have meant nothing to the poorest people in Ontario. Look, everybody likes a tax cut; let's acknowledge that. But when you look at the reality of what has been put in this pocket and taken out of the other pocket, people—middle-class people as well—are no further ahead. Tuition costs have gone up. All kinds of things have gone up. There are more user fees under this government than in many, many years, and this is in good economic times. To achieve the cut in spending and to be able to give those tax cuts, entire areas of public service have been eliminated.

Let's look at the Ministry of the Environment for a moment. The environment is what got me into politics in the first place. I never dreamed I was going to become a politician. One thing kind of led to another. That's probably true of many of us here. We get involved in activities in our communities and our nightmare comes true: here we are. Actually, it's been quite an honour for me to represent the area which was once called Riverdale and then changed to Broadview-Greenwood and now to Toronto-Danforth. But it's the people I represent, and I'm very honoured that they continue to elect me. I do my best to represent those people, and I can tell you now that people are very aware of the impacts of the cuts to the Ministry of the Environment—about \$100 million. About 60%—we used to say 39% or 40%, but if you add up capital and operating costs, 60% has been cut from the Ministry of the Environment. We've heard from independent bodies out there, including the auditor and including the Environmental Commissioner—everybody knows that's somebody I objected to. In fact, I recall we were here a day or two extra at Christmas last year because I was in great opposition to that member being anointed by this government as Environmental Commissioner of this province. But even he has said, albeit it more mildly and more carefully than the previous Environmental Commissioner, Eva Ligeti, that there is a crisis—he didn't use the word "crisis," because he was gentler in his approach—a problem in the Ministry of the Environment and they need to do something about it.

There's no point right now in my discussing what happened in Walkerton, but more and more in the situation we are seeing daily on TV, the inquiry into Walkerton, time and time again people are talking about the fact that after the cuts and after the government completely privatized drinking water testing, it was harder and harder to keep up with the job these people were hired to do.

That is happening all over Ontario in all kinds of sectors, right across the board. There aren't enough inspectors there. Again, contrary to what the Premier and others say, about a third of the staff at the Ministry of the Environment, including inspectors, were laid off. The morale within the Ministry of the Environment is very low. They are unable to do the job they were hired to do.

Today my leader, Howard Hampton, asked the Acting Premier a question, and was answered in some kind of fashion by the Minister of Agriculture, about the cuts in inspectors for meat testing. This is in the context of what we're now reading about daily that's happened over the years in England: mad cow disease, which is killing people. I don't know if people saw in the *Globe and Mail* today a story about deer, I believe, on a deer farm in Alberta, where some strain of mad cow disease has been discovered and those animals are going to be put down. At this point they're not clear whether or not that disease can spread to cows and then to humans. But if you put that together with the information about the illegal meat-killing plants, then we could have a major health crisis on our hands. I'd like to know what the Minister of Health has to say about that.

When you have a government that is crowing about cutting taxes over and over again and balancing the budget, what's wrong with this picture? That's the role of the opposition. The government sees its role as being there to get up and crow about what they conceive to be their successes. But they don't address, and are not addressing, all these problems that exist right now in our society because of those cuts and because of the down-loding.

Look at the city of Toronto. I was on city council for a couple of years, and, like this place, I understand the pressures involved in coming up with a budget every year. There are all kinds of very important community services that our city councils, our municipalities, supply to the communities. There have been many cuts and more user fees across the board since this government came into power anyway, but in the city of Toronto there's a new tax bill that the government is bringing in, which is going to put any tax increase that cities have to bring forward in order to maintain their services completely on the backs of homeowners—in this party we're referring to it as a home invasion—because the government has decided, in its wisdom, to cap all businesses and multi-unit apartments.

You know, even small businesses aren't happy about that. They want their own category. The capping is fine, but they don't want to be pitted against the homeowners in their area who shop in their stores. They also want certainty; they want their own category. Once again, that didn't happen.

In the city of Toronto, for instance, they're going to have to struggle because of all of the downloading. There was the interest-free loan they got because Premier Harris and Mel Lastman decided that they had to make the megacity look like a success, but now the chickens are coming home to roost. They have to pay back that loan and deal with all the downloading of social housing and all the other things I mentioned earlier, and more. They're going to have to choose between tax increases or cutting even more really vital, important services.

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Those are the kinds of discussions that we should be having here in exchange with the government, which has the majority and the power to ensure those vital services that we as a government provide and our cities and towns provide. I'm hoping very much to hear from government members their solutions to some of those problems that are facing us and will be facing us over the next few years.

Mr Bisson: I'm going to take this opportunity to bring to light a little bit of what we've been seeing in northern Ontario recently in regard to the Northlander. Mr Speaker, you were here last week when the Premier and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines basically announced by way of North Bay that they were going to eliminate subsidies to the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. It was their view that trying to subsidize an organization like the ONTC was, in their words, throwing good money after bad and that it was about time government got out of the business of running freight services, rail passenger services and long-distance services in northern Ontario.

Mr Speaker, as a northerner, you understand as I do, that that is a really wrong-minded policy because, in fact, the Ontario northland commission plays a very vital role when it comes to providing transportation infrastructure to northeastern Ontario. What's interesting to note is that just last week, the Premier, in scrums, was making comments about just how bad an idea it was for the government to be subsidizing the ONTC. I was interested to note that when he went back home on the weekend, he made some comments to the media. First of all, here in Toronto—and I'll get to what he said in North Bay a little bit later—he said, "If you gave everybody who took the Northlander train an airline ticket from wherever their community was all the way into Toronto, or gave them all a limo, it would be cheaper than providing a subsidy to the Ontario northland commission to provide rail passenger services to people from the Cochrane to North Bay corridor."

I am looking forward to the \$30 million it would cost to do that which the government is going to give us, because currently, under last year's estimates, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines was transferring to the ONTC a mere \$4 million in subsidies to operate the Northlander and other services under the ONTC. If you were to give everybody who got on the Northlander an airline ticket to go from their community to Toronto, it would cost upwards of \$30 million. So you

should be happy, Mr Speaker. The Premier was announcing by way of his flippant comments to the media that we were going to get a \$26-million increase in subsidies to the Northlander.

I thought, "What a great idea." Imagine what we can do with that \$30 million. You and I can get together, as the member from Sault Ste Marie and the member from Timmins-James Bay, and we can talk about making those vital links of transportation between the ACR and the Northlander; we can provide good transportation services to people throughout that area; we can provide good rates when it comes to industries along the line, when it comes to freight services; we can provide better services when it comes to basic infrastructure when it comes to rail and telecommunications—if the government gives us that \$30 million.

I hope the Premier gives us that money, but the reality is that the Premier had a mike stuck in front of his face and like most times, he didn't know what to say—he was trying to defend his actions—so he tried to say flippantly, "Oh, if all 31,500 passengers from last year were to get an airline ticket, it would work out to being a better deal."

The other problem is that in most of those communities, there are no more airlines. Why? Because the same Premier and the same government sold off norOntair. You can't take a plane from Cochrane, you can't take a plane from Kirkland Lake and you can't take a plane from Englehart, because the Mike Harris government sold off norOntair. Now if they want to be able to get out of their communities, it's by car, by bus or by train. If they want to take a plane, they've got to drive up to Timmins, and do you know how much we pay for an Air Ontario flight on a week flight from Timmins to Toronto return? We pay \$873 for a return ticket, if you don't go over the weekend. As I understand it, most people who take the Northlander do so in order to go to Toronto during the week and come back during that week. It's not an over-weekend thing. It's normally down for medical appointments and back, for business or whatever it might be. Most people who are taking the train couldn't afford to pay \$873 to get an airline ticket, without talking about their cab fares in and out of Pearson Airport, and the cab fare it's going to cost them to go from Kirkland Lake all the way to Timmins to get their airplane ride down to Toronto.

So I say, Mr Speaker, I look forward, as you do, to the \$26-million increase this would mean to the commission if the Premier were to make good on the comments he made here.

But what's even more interesting, as he was speaking against the idea of subsidizing the ONTC and saying it was a bad idea for the government to be involved in this business, he went back home on the weekend, on Saturday and he was in North Bay. The media and the public went after him and said, "How wrong-minded can you be? In your very own community 1,000 jobs could be lost if you move through with this," and he says, "I didn't really mean it. No, no. Freight services are going

to stay. Don't worry about it. Oh no, everything's fine. We're not closing down the Northlander. If we have to give a subsidy to the private sector, by Lord, we're going to give them a subsidy."

I say I am tired of policy being invented in press conferences by this Premier. We in northern Ontario need to have a government that is serious about building the partnerships that we need to build the infrastructure necessary to allow our economy to work. We can't have this flippant policy-making every time Mike Harris walks out in front of the camera and changes his mind. He goes last week from saying we're not going to subsidize it, we're getting rid of it, to later on saying we can afford to give everybody a limo ride to Toronto or put them on an Air Ontario flight, which would be \$30 million. I'll take the \$26 million, gladly. Then he goes home and he does a press conference and says, "I want to be a good guy in North Bay, so I didn't really mean all those mean, nasty things I said in Toronto about the Northlander and about the ONTC."

As I said, we need to have a government that understands its responsibility. Its responsibility, simply put, is to provide basic infrastructure to northern Ontarians and to all Ontarians to make sure that both industry and people can operate within the province.

Can you imagine if the Premier of Ontario were to get up and say, "We're not going to invest in infrastructure in southern Ontario, because we think subsidizing public transportation in Ontario is a bad thing," and if the government was to say, "We're going to stop funding 400 series highways in this province. What a waste of money. Get rid of it"? Can you imagine what would happen to the economy of Ontario, to the Ford plant, the GM plant, the Chrysler plant and every other plant along Highway 400?

If the government of Ontario understands its responsibility in spending billions of taxpayers' dollars to fund 400 series highways across this province so companies like GM can ship their goods up and down the road in order to be able to operate, I would certainly hope this government understands we in northern Ontario need similar types of investment. Being that the distances are longer and the area is greater and the population is smaller, yes, that's going to cost some money. That's why we put the Northlander in place and that's why we created the ONTC in the first place.

If the government is now saying they're going to give us \$26 million more for the ONTC, I want to be the first to stand up and applaud. That would be a great thing. I don't think that's what it is. I think it was another flippant comment by this Premier. Or, I say to the government, stand out of the way, get out of Queen's Park and move yourself off the government benches because, quite frankly, you are bad for northern Ontario, you are bad for business in northern Ontario and, more importantly, you are bad for the people in northern Ontario, because in the end you're going to cripple our industry. Industries such as Falconbridge, Abitibi-Price, Spruce Falls, Tembec need transportation infrastructure to be

able to operate. If you don't provide it, it means the death of those companies, and we can't stand having that happen in our part of the province.

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr David Young (Willowdale): It was interesting to hear the member opposite and his colleague go on for some time trying to discuss some issues that were in front of this Legislature, but in reality, there was very little discussion about the content of this bill. What he did have to say would have been, frankly, more credible if it had not been for the track record that he and the other members of the New Democratic Party have to live with, a track record that includes the following facts.

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When the NDP assumed office in 1990, the debt was \$42 billion in this province. By the time they made their exit in 1995, it was \$101 billion. In five short years, the NDP had moved us to a point where the people of Ontario found that the debt was more than doubled. In fact, in five short years they ran up a debt in this province that was greater than that generated since Confederation.

When we talk about fiscal management, when we talk about what can be done and what cannot be done, I encourage those listening and watching to also consider economic reality, one being reasonable and living within one's means. What this government has done over the last five and a half years is just that: it has lived within the means. Now, with all the tax cuts that we have brought forward, we have more money. We have \$14 billion more coming into this province, so we can spend more, as we are doing on priority areas such as health care and education. It's because we grew the economy, it's because we have grown the amount that has been taken in through tax revenues as a result of the tax cuts that we are in a position to spend on those priority items. You can't simply spend and spend when you don't have the money. That's what they did.

Mr Colle: I've heard the comments from my colleagues from the Danforth and Timmins. I think we have a lot in common here, those of us from Toronto, with what's happening to the Northlander. The same thing has happened here in the greater Toronto area. We've got a government that's walked away from funding public transportation. GO Transit is basically now relying on property taxes. It's ludicrous. The Toronto Transit Commission used to get 75% funding for capital from this province. They get zero. They are killing public transportation in the north and in the south at a time when their coffers are full with billions of dollars in tax revenues—and they talk about priorities?

As I said before, everyone agrees our hospitals are in chaos. Our health system is under so much stress. Our schools are in turmoil. We have no housing and no public transportation. With all these billions coming into the coffers every day from the land transfer tax, provincial sales tax, from all their casinos in every community, they can't fund the basic necessities: our hospitals, our schools, our housing and our public transportation. Whether it's northern Ontario, that's seeing their train

system basically eradicated, or whether it's downtown Toronto, where this government is going to kill public transportation that took 100 years to build, they are doing what no other state or provincial jurisdiction does anywhere in the world. Nowhere in the world do property taxpayers pay for a system like GO or a system like the TTC—nowhere. Whether it be in the Third World, whether it be in Europe or North America, the province or state always helps pay for public transportation. Here in Ontario, it's unique. It's shameful that they don't support public transportation, which means better roads, less gridlock, a better economy and a better environment.

Mr Galt: It was interesting to listen to the two speakers in the NDP, the third party here, talk about doom and gloom. I can tell you, when we heard doom and gloom, it was back in the early 1990s when the out-migration from this province was unprecedented in the history of the province. So many people were leaving the province because of the red tape, the regulations and the kinds of taxes that were being brought into this province. That's part and parcel why jobs were disappearing.

We talk about job creation. When you go into negative job creation, when you look at the kinds of tax increases that you people brought to Ontario, with every tax increase you could see following immediately afterwards a drop in revenue, billions and billions of dollars dropped in revenue.

Yes, you tried to spend your way out, which isn't too bad of an economic policy in real severe recessions, but the government ahead of you had to put money away. We had, of course, the spendthrift Liberals, who couldn't outspend anybody faster in the good times of the late 1980s. They just doubled their rate of spending. But you people in the third party, when you were in government, tried to outdo them by debt and deficit, and you more than doubled the debt of this province. It has been mentioned earlier what happened in those five years: you created more debt in those five years than had been created in the province of Ontario since the beginning of time. It's quite a record, one that I wouldn't think you'd be very proud of, but that's what really happened.

Look what happened immediately following 1995, the election: job creation started, and since then some 830,000 net new jobs and over a half-million people off welfare. That wasn't just coincidental. The American economy didn't instantly change on June 8, 1995.

The Acting Speaker: Further comments or questions? The member for York West.

Mr Sergio: Sean, would you like to have two minutes? Yes. If you don't mind, Mr Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Renfrew.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I wanted to make a point about the Ontario Northland. I was interested in what our friend from Timmins said about what may have been said in North Bay on the weekend.

I was struck here last week when I heard the restructuring that was being ably supervised, we were told, by the member from someplace in the Niagara Peninsula,

who is the Minister of Northern Development—a good young man who I'm sure means well. But the ONR has been, for almost a century, not just a major instrument of economic development in northeastern Ontario but, if you've ever been around North Bay, let me tell you, it's not only a big employer in North Bay but for decades—dare I say it?—the ONR was the Tory party at work. I'm not surprised to find out that the member from Nipissing has gone home to find out that not a few of his very good friends and constituents and supporters are perhaps a little less impressed by what was announced someplace in the Niagara Peninsula about northeastern Ontario's future transportation system.

I have to say that we are looking at a situation where transportation needs are, as the member from Timmins-Chapleau indicated, qualitatively different in much of northern Ontario. That railroad was begun by a provincial government that felt the market, in and of itself, was not going to provide the kind of infrastructure that was needed to assist with the economic development of communities from North Bay to the James Bay shore.

I do hope that Mr Harris has gone home and listened to what he has been told by those hundreds of people who live in and around North Bay, who will tell him that the Ontario Northland Railway is a very important part of the employment not just of North Bay but of the economic prospects of that whole corridor in northeastern Ontario. I thank my friend from Timmins for making that point.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Bisson: That's exactly the point. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem as if this government understands what its role is when it comes to providing for basic infrastructure and programs for the benefit of both business and individuals, not only in northern Ontario, I would argue, but across the province.

The other thing that I find quite interesting—and my colleague, Marilyn Churley, mentioned this earlier in her comments and it was responded to somewhat by government benches—is that the Tories are pretty quick to get to their feet and say that everything was doom and gloom before 1995; it was a big black hole; nothing existed that was good. It was the dark days, and everything is just perfect and rosy, cheery and beautiful after the election of 1995. They tend to try to take all the credit for those things, but in fact we're starting to find, as we've been saying all along, that economic cycles, by their very nature, are cyclical. What we had in the 1990s through 1989-90, was a North American recession, as well as a European recession, that resulted not only in the Ontario economy but the Canadian economy as well as the American economy going downward. As a result yes, all governments had increased amounts of debt because they were dealing with what was happening, when it came to lesser activity within the economy than they control.

What's interesting now is going to be to watch what this government says as we start to see what possibly could be the beginning of a recession again in North

America. We're now seeing, as Mr Clinton leaves the White House and George Bush Jr walks into the White House, that there seems to be a lessening of activity within the economy, to the point where we're now starting to see the major auto makers reduce the production of cars. I forget what the number is, but I think it went from 18 million to 16 million cars being produced this year, and that is seen to be going down. So is Mr Harris saying that's all a result of his policies? If so, I'd be interested to know.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

1630

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): It's a pleasure to enter the debate on second reading of Bill 152, An Act to implement the 2000 Budget to establish a made-in-Ontario tax system and to amend various Acts. I'm going to be sharing my time with some of my colleagues this evening.

There are several things in this bill that I could comment on. It being 149 pages long, there are a lot of good things there. But I'm going to focus my comments on just a few so that I allow enough time for my caucus colleagues to also be able to enter the debate.

This bill provides the legislative framework for a made-for-Ontario personal income tax system, a system that will be independent of the federal government. This bill will ensure that the province has the ability to develop taxation policies that meet the needs of our taxpayers.

This is a government that keeps its promises. To demonstrate at this juncture how we keep our promises, I want to quote from our Blueprint, in which under the heading "Our Own Tax System" we said: "When the federal government imposes tax increases, provincial taxes are automatically hiked. If we had an independent tax system, we could free ourselves of those tax hikes and have more flexibility in designing tax breaks to create jobs"—our commitment. "We are going to establish a made-for-Ontario tax system, completely independent of the federal government's." We are fulfilling our commitment to introduce a provincial income tax system based on income so that people can keep more of their hard-earned money.

In addition, I'd like to quote from the Minister of Finance's comment in the statement to the Legislature, Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review 2000. The minister said, "We will use our ... made-for-Ontario policy flexibility to enhance Ontario's non-refundable" tax "credits for students, people with disabilities and their caregivers. The \$60-million increase in tax benefits will assist both part-time and full-time students with the costs of their post-secondary education and ... help people with disabilities live independently and with dignity."

I'm pleased to be here this evening and to be able to speak on this. I also want to talk about some of the issues that are important, and they're right in the bill. This bill will be providing investors in research-intensive, labour-sponsored investment funds with an enhanced tax credit. Currently, the Community Small Business Investment

Funds Act allows a corporation that is registered to sell shares that are eligible for a 15% tax credit for residents of Ontario. Proposed amendments to the act would increase the tax credit to 20% for the shares. This encourages investors to invest in these types of research capabilities. It will mean more people will be investing. There will be more tax credits given to them. This encourages investment and the amounts that people invest. Because more people are investing, it will mean there's a positive impact on capital funds available throughout all of the various companies. Research project funding will be expanded and people will not be driven away, because we are offering opportunities here in Ontario.

I want to talk a little bit about some of my riding of Thornhill. Part of Thornhill is located in Markham. The town of Markham has status as Canada's high-tech capital. Over 800 high-tech families are located in Markham—population 190,000. Markham, in the information technology sector alone, has over 3,100 firms employing over 155,000 persons. This will in fact benefit a number of businesses in Markham.

Markham is the home of Canada's fastest-growing companies. I'd like to name a few: Imaging Processing Systems, machine vision systems; Trimax Inc—retail transaction software; Queue Systems Inc, technology consulting; Genesis Microchip Inc, image-processing microchips; Media Duplication Corp, CD manufacturer.

Media Duplication Corp will also benefit from other portions of this bill. The Ontario interactive digital media tax credit is available for a maximum of \$100,000 of eligible marketing and distribution expenditures. I'm proud to say that the mayor of Markham, Don Cousens, who used to be a member of this Legislature, is a very strong proponent of promoting the town of Markham and all of the technology there.

I want to also talk about the fact that this will increase job growth, as our government has always said that all of the policies we have made with respect to taxation, with respect to a number of other initiatives, have increased the economy. I want to talk about the jobs, quoting again from the statement to the Legislature by Ernie Eves: "So far this year, Ontario has created 184,000 new jobs compared to the same period in 1999. Since September of 1995, Ontario has created 830,000 new jobs, more than half of the jobs created in Canada over this period." We have already exceeded our commitment in our Blueprint of 825,000 net new jobs.

I want to talk about the strong consumer spending growth in the year 2000. Over the first nine months of 2000, Ontario retail sales were up 7.9% from a year ago. The housing market remains strong. Over the first 10 months of 2000, housing starts in Ontario rose 8.7% from a year ago. Over the first 10 months of 2000, Toronto new home sales increased 16.5% from a year ago.

This booming economy has had a wonderful effect on York region. Thornhill is in York region; part of it is in Markham and a portion of it is in Vaughan. I want to quote from a newspaper article in one of the local papers, The Liberal: "York region boasts the biggest residential

construction boom in Canada and the lowest unemployment level in the greater Toronto area." This is according to the region's annual economic and development review. Also in York region, "employment has increased to approximately 350,000 jobs.... Positive performance of residential, industrial (and) commercial activity indicates a continuing strong economy in York region." This report also talks about York region being "the fifth most populous region in the country, behind greater Vancouver, greater Montreal, Peel region and Ottawa-Carleton.

"Vaughan's population"—part of Thornhill is in Vaughan—"grew the most in York last year, increasing by 9.4% or 14,740 new residents.... Markham's population," which also encompasses Thornhill, "jumped 5.9% or 11,420 residents."

For all of these reasons, I'm proud to be here and to enter this debate, because York region—Thornhill, Markham and Vaughan—has benefited from the wonderful economy that all the decisions of this government have made. This bill is just one other opportunity for us to be able to put forth our plan, put forth our vision and increase all the wonderful things this government is doing.

I want to talk a little bit about Markham's high-tech capital. Three of the top five electronic equipment firms on the Fortune 500 list are located in Markham; 20 of the top Fortune 250 companies are located in Markham. Three of the top five infotech companies in Canada have major operations in Markham. I'm proud to say that the town of Markham, the city of Vaughan and Thornhill will benefit from Bill 152.

There are a number of other areas in this bill that I could comment on, and some of it has to do with the education portion, but looking at the time and sharing my time with one of the other members, I will conclude my remarks by saying it has been a pleasure to be able to enter this debate. I'm proud to be here and to represent my community of Thornhill.

1640

Mr. R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'm also pleased to enter this debate on Bill 152, the budget bill. When I use the word "budget," I really start to tingle all over, the reason being that being in business for as long as I have, if you don't have a budget, if you don't stick to a budget and if you don't do a workable budget, unfortunately things just do not happen.

A good example of it is two years ago, when our government balanced the budget in this province. When you look at the services that we can now provide and increase, it suggests to us that if you balance budgets, if you have a good, workable budget—I want to emphasize that word, "workable"—for example, in your home, you can get those extra services; you can get that new car or you can get that new fridge or stove. What happens in the province if you have a good, workable budget and you have the revenues coming in, caused by increases in job activity, is that you can also add to those services. Much like in your home with the washing machine, we in turn in the province can then increase spending in priority areas.

Certainly we know two of the priority areas. One is health care, the only thing that is common to every single person who lives in this great province. Another one is education. Having a good budget allows us to concentrate more on the funding within the classroom.

It was interesting: on Saturday I had the opportunity to go to the Miracle broadcast that is done by one of our local radio stations to collect funds and toys for the underprivileged or vulnerable children in our community. I got there about 10 o'clock in the morning and I looked in the little plastic box where the funds could go if you wished to donate. It was about half full. The other box, where people were putting the toys, was about 15 feet by 15 feet by 20 feet high. It was, at that particular time on Saturday morning, about three quarters full. I had the opportunity, of course, of being interviewed on both of the radio stations, and I said, "All you have to do is look at the type and the quality of toys that are coming in to know that we have one of the greatest economies going in Ontario that there has ever been."

It isn't the government that has created those jobs; it's the people, the business community, whether it be the small business man, the big business man, whatever. They are the ones who have created the jobs. What we've done is given them the tools to create those jobs. I want to compliment everybody who has been involved in any way in creating those 800,000-plus jobs, those 500,000-plus people who have gone off welfare. I think the programs we have introduced over the last six years are what has changed this province and turned it around.

It's interesting. They say, "These tax cuts haven't worked." Let me tell you, they have worked. You know they've worked because other provinces are doing the same thing, and finally the federal government is seeing the light, saying that you've got to put money back into people's pockets so they can spend it. It's got such a tremendous ripple effect, whether it be across this province or across the entire country of Canada, to increase our economy and make us one of the big players in the global marketplace. It's interesting to hear some of our opposition talk about cuts, that we've done all the cutting, and yet if you look at their track record, they increased people, they increased bureaucracy, and yet they just didn't get the job done.

We keep hearing about a water situation. There have been water problems in areas of this province, in some of the municipalities, for many, many years. They had all the inspectors and they had all the bureaucracy, but it didn't seem to make a great deal of difference.

Landfill is an interesting one. I remember when the previous government was in power. They changed the criteria for landfill selection four times, I believe it was, in the three years that I was warden of the county I represent. So I suggest to you that if you're going to do cuts—and I've certainly got no problems with that, because the business community has had to do that for years when they set their budgets: good, workable budgets. But cuts and efficiency, I want to emphasize, go hand in hand. With efficiency, you get an increase in the economy the way that we have.

Look at what's happened in Peterborough. I made the comment that more tax revenue because of more jobs and more people working just made an absolutely tremendous difference in the amount of dollars that have been either dedicated or put into my community. We have gotten, over this past summer, to the extent of \$300 million that came into the riding of Peterborough: approximately \$180 million for a new hospital; a new cath lab; the most up-to-date swing lab in North America. We have an MRI. Some \$32 million was given to Trent University and SuperBuild; about \$28 million has been given to Sir Sandford Fleming College on their SuperBuild fund. This is happening because of the economy and what this government and the business community, and indeed the workers, all working together, have done not only for my riding but indeed for this province.

I'm very, very proud of the fact that I have been the member for Peterborough and in some small way have been able to make a case for the government. I believe in making a case. I believe in doing a business plan that says, "If you do it this way, the end result will be good. It will be efficient, it will be effective, and it will increase the economy of the province." I'm pleased that I was part of this government to be able to convince the various ministries of the need, and the need can only be affirmed by the business plan that you have to present to them.

Certainly, if you also look at the expansion in our community, I believe assessment this past year is up some \$47 million. That is created because we have an atmosphere in this province that says Ontario is open for business. When you get these companies expanding in the way that they are, whether it be the Fisher-Gages of the world, the Quaker Oats, the Chapters, the Home Depots, all of them are involved and want to be part of this great province, and they want to help us create an atmosphere where we can deliver the services all the people need, and that's exactly what is happening. I am extremely proud, first of all, to represent Peterborough, and also to be part of this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Comments and questions?

1650

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): In response to the members from the government side who spoke, first of all, when you talk about northern Ontario you're not talking about balanced budgets or a brighter future.

There is no balanced budget in health care in northern Ontario. If you look at Sudbury, for example, our community has to raise \$27 million for the restructuring of the health care system that this government imposed on us. We never, ever used to run deficits in our three hospitals. Well, we do now, and the deficits are literally killing the services the hard-working professionals we have in our health care system are trying to provide.

They have repeatedly asked this government to step in, to come and do an operational review. They're saying, "Look at the books, look at the way we're doing business. Tell us where we're going wrong, and we'll correct the problems, if there are problems." In return, all

they're asking this government is, "If there are no problems and if we are doing everything in a very efficient manner, give us more money because we don't have enough money in our system." Clearly that is the problem we have with health care.

Municipal restructuring: the city of Sudbury was very proud that they hadn't raised taxes for nine years and that they had balanced books for over 12 years. No longer. Thanks to the Harris government we now have a restructuring cost of \$24 million. Initially the government expert said it was going to be \$12 million, but the government expert was way off. It's now \$24 million to restructure an already very efficient regional municipality of Sudbury into the city of greater Sudbury.

If you look at the brighter future when it comes to jobs, this government is responsible for 2,644 jobs leaving my area. I don't know how anyone can consider it a brighter future when this government has taken that many jobs out of our area.

Mr Bisson: I am worried about the member from Peterborough. He stands in the House and says he tingles all over every time he has to speak about the budget. I'm worried there might be something medically wrong with him.

I observed for a good seven or eight minutes that he was still breathing and wasn't falling over. So I thought, "Well, maybe I don't understand the meaning of the word 'tingle'." I looked it up in the dictionary, and it says, "tingle:"—with a "g"—"to have a sensation of slight stings or prickly pains from a sharp blow or from a cold object." We do know this government has given many sharp blows to people and many people have been left in the cold, so maybe he's starting to feel that tingling sensation you get from a government when they do the things they do.

Or could it be that it's the word "tinkle:"—with a "k"—"to give forth or make a succession of short, light ringing sounds to cause a tinkling or jingling," which sort of makes me think about advertising. This government stands up with its jingles and says, "Look at what we're doing for Ontario," when we know it doesn't really mean a tinkler's damn. That's an X-word in the dictionary when it comes to what really happened in the Ontario economy.

So I worry about the member from Peterborough. If you're not feeling well, I suggest that maybe you go off to one of these hospitals and stand in line and wait for those services like everybody else does. I'm starting to worry that if you tingle every time you have to speak about this budget, there may really be something wrong with you, or you're involved in some sort of process, as they say in the dictionary, where you are tinkling, trying to put a better face on this budget than it really has.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is a pleasure to join in the debate on the Bill 152, the budget bill.

The reason I mention that again—I've said it before—is that a lot of times people drift away into the tingling all over sensation, but I want to bring it back to the budget

bill. I am very happy that in five short years our government has been able to balance the budget twice in a row, and that has not been done in the last 40 years. So I'm very happy to be part of the government.

I will differ slightly with my own caucus member from Thornhill when she says Markham is the high-tech capital of the world.

Mrs Molinari: It is.

Mr Gill: Actually in Brampton-Bramalea, which is my riding, Nortel, as you know, is the best company in the world in high-tech communications, the Internet and everything else, and they are thriving.

Because of all these various initiatives the government has undertaken, we have been able to create 839,000 net new jobs. The member from Sudbury talked about what have we done for the north and what are we planning to do for the north? In the medical field I understand we are going to be giving a tuition fee incentive, so that we can train more doctors. Hopefully that will alleviate some of the shortcomings we have in terms of manpower to send some doctors that way.

We have created more jobs. I talked about the high-tech capital, medical doctors and, you know, twice in a row—when we came in, we had a \$12-billion deficit and we've overcome that with our good guidance.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I'm pleased to rise for a couple of minutes to speak to the comments of the member from Peterborough, as well as this balanced-budget legislation in general. We know today that all governments are moving toward balanced budgets, as well they should. The time is long past when we should spend more money than we take in. But I'm a little concerned that the tingling sensation we talk about may be a little premature.

In a day or two, we're going to adjourn for what may be, some speculate, at least three months and probably three and a half months, and we won't be back here until the middle of April. I'm trying to be positive, but what concerns me is something that's affecting us in my riding, in the county of Essex, and that is concerns about the auto industry. The auto industry is now facing some problems. We see that every day in the paper. Energy costs are going out of this world, both natural gas and hydro. That's going to affect the auto industry to a great extent. It's going to have a great effect on the greenhouse industry in my area and on agriculture all the way around, because energy is used to plow the land. Energy is a concern all the way through agriculture.

I think we should be looking at these things, rather than looking back at the budget we feel so good about right now. We have to look forward to the spring, and we should be turning our minds to at least doing something to mitigate the problems we're going to face then.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Stewart: I just had a glass of water, so I can bring the level of tinkling—or tingling—down.

Interjection: Tinkling?

Mr Stewart: Now you've got me confused.

Interjection.

Mr Stewart: That may happen after. Sorry.

It is my pleasure to rise and be very excited. When I talk about tingling, I'm talking about excitement, I'm talking about enthusiasm, I'm talking about the economy, I'm talking about doing things right. By doing things right, we have created those jobs, we have taken people off welfare and life in this province is improving drastically from what it was.

It was interesting that the member from—and I'll get it right today—Sudbury made the comment that they have to go out and raise some dollars for the hospital. That has always happened. The only difference now is that we've gone to a 70-30 split—30 for the municipality—in comparison to previous governments, which were on a 50-50 basis.

1700

I listened to some of the other members and they were talking about what things may not have been done right that our government has done. Let me assure you, there's probably nothing any of us have done that doesn't take some improvement. If we're open-minded and we want to improve it, it will happen. Change is the greatest thing in the world, but you've got to do change right. You can look back, but for goodness' sake, let's not go back.

I'm very excited, I'm still tingling about what's going on in this province and I am pleased to be part of it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Conway: I'd like to take some moments this afternoon to speak to the budget bill, Bill 152, in the name of our friend Mr Eves. I want to spend most of my time on part III of the bill, which deals with amendments to the Electricity Act.

My friend from Peterborough has said some things I want to just touch on briefly.

Interjections.

Mr Conway: I have to say to my friend from Peterborough, as I drove through a perfectly Siberian blizzard last night from the Ottawa Valley to Toronto, the only comforting sign I saw was along Highway 7 in the midst of this snowstorm after midnight, something that said, "We welcome Stewart Travel to Rollands," I think. That's about all I could see on an otherwise horrible trip down Highways 7 and 115.

It is true that the province of Ontario has enjoyed very robust times in the last five, six or seven years. Anyone in government would be happy to have had that sunshine. I've said before and I will say again, one would have to be particularly miserable not to say that perhaps some of what the government did helped to some degree with that prosperity.

But make no mistake about it: the engine that drives the Ontario economy is the auto industry. If you look at the Treasurer's own data, particularly the budget papers, it's astonishing the extent to which we are now dependent on our ability to make and sell automobiles and automobile parts here and export them into the American economy. I hope the last five years continue. There are some signs out of Chrysler and Ford that that's slowing down, and it may be slowing down rather sharply.

I say to my friend from Peterborough, listening to the Harris Tories the last few months reminds me of the Peterson Liberals back in the late 1980s. It is a fair criticism that we spent very liberally because we thought the revenues were just going to keep coming forever—well, maybe not forever, but at least until the next election and beyond. Do you know what? We got a very painful surprise in the latter part of 1989 and certainly into 1990. It started to change dramatically and the problem was that we had cranked spending up to this level on the basis that revenues would more or less stay where we had taken them. We were very wrong in that expectation.

A lot has been said about the New Democrats, and they have their own accounting to give for their time in office, but in fairness to Mr Rae and his government, one of the biggest problems they had is that the spending that they had helped encourage in the latter half of the 1980s remained well above where the revenue line was in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

I observe in the financial documents tabled by the Treasurer last week in the second quarter statement that we are now looking at a year, fiscal 2000-01, where revenues are expected to be at or above \$64 billion. That's absolutely incredible, wonderful. Program spending is now going to be somewhat in excess of \$50 billion, up \$7 billion in five years. That's pretty dramatic.

I was fascinated in the recent federal election campaign to hear Stockwell Day talk about fiscal planning. Has anybody looked at the Klein-Day budget that was tabled last spring? It would make a Liberal blush with embarrassment. Stockwell Day spent money like a drunken sailor. You've got to know there's an election coming, and it's good to know that the species *homo sapiens politicus* behaves very similarly on the eve of an election, regardless of his or her stripe. But the spending in the Alberta jurisdiction this year is stupendous. Certainly Mr Harris and Mr Eves are not taking a backseat to anyone when it comes to spending. If, God forbid, those revenues crest at \$64 billion and start to trend downwards to \$62 billion, \$61 billion or \$60 billion, let me tell you—now it's \$112 billion worth of accrued provincial debt—the job of the Minister of Finance for Ontario is going to get very interesting very quickly.

If you look at the Outlook document tabled by the Treasurer last week, it's not going to take very much to turn black ink into red ink. We've had growth rates in excess of 5%; for the year just ending I think 6.1% was the last number. That is phenomenal. If that growth goes to 3% or 2.5%, I'm glad I'm not going to be there, because life is going to get very difficult very quickly.

I simply make the point that, yes, there's been a lot of good news, but we have, in a very buoyant economy, added over \$22 billion to the debt of the province. I understand the argument. The Harris government said, "We are going to take our position with those who say that if you cut taxes you're going to stimulate the economy." There has been stimulus, there's no question.

There was an article in the *Globe and Mail* Report on Business, I think on Thursday or Friday of last week,

showing the level of consumer debt. Did anybody see that? I should have brought it with me. It was staggering, the amount of debt that individual Ontarians and Canadians have piled up on their plastic in some of the best times in the post-war period.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): What's the point?

Mr Conway: The member for Etobicoke North suggests, "What's the point?" The point is simply this: that in good times we've added \$22 billion plus to the provincial debt. That's just deferred taxation. That's all that is. Debt-servicing costs now are continuing at the \$8.9-billion, \$9-billion range.

Mr Hastings: So what?

Mr Conway: "So what?" the member says. That's as much money as we're spending on education. I tell you that if the economy goes south, a debt of \$112 billion is going to be a much more burdensome weight for Her Majesty's provincial government to carry.

So I simply say to my friend from Peterborough, who is an exemplary government loyalist, that, yes, there is good news to report, but behind the good news there are some indicators that I hope give all of us pause. It is to one of those indicators I want to turn, because, Mr Speaker, you would want me to talk more specifically about Bill 152.

Bill 152, in part III, offers a number of amendments to the Electricity Act, 1998. I want to take another opportunity to raise my concern about the current state of electricity policy in the province of Ontario. I submit, I hope not too self-interestedly, that there are few, if any, reforms that have been undertaken in the mandate of the Harris government that are more important and more likely to affect the economic and social well-being of Ontarians than the electricity reforms that were legislated here a couple of years ago. This is profoundly important, very complicated and, regrettably, highly confusing public policy. But make no mistake about it, there are dramatic changes occurring as I speak and they are about to touch on the daily life of every Ontario farmer, residential consumer and business and commercial owner in the province of Ontario.

It is a \$10-billion business, the Ontario electricity business. If you are a typical residential consumer in Ontario today, your home electricity bill is in excess of \$1,000, and that bill is going to go up and it's going to go up significantly over the next 12 to 15 months. I'm not here to say it's all the government's fault. One of the good-news items that my friend from Peterborough was just talking about was the expansion in the economy, and he's right. We have seen dramatic improvements in employment and utilization of plant and equipment in Ontario and much of North America in the last six, seven, eight years. The Americans have enjoyed the longest sustained economic growth in their history.

1710

But one thing that has not been growing is the electricity system to support that. There has been very little new electrical generating plant installed in Ontario,

Canada, and the United States over the last eight or nine years. One of the real problems we face today in the electricity business is there's too much demand chasing too little supply. We have legislated decontrol. We are opening up the electricity business in Ontario to market forces. What do we all remember from our high school or university economics? The law of supply and demand. You've got significantly more demand than you have supply? That means only one thing for price: price is going up.

The other thing that I think Ontarians don't yet understand about the new electricity policy that the Harris government is pursuing is that we have surrendered a century-old policy of a made-in-Ontario electricity price and policy. We are now going to let the North American market dictate the price of electricity in Pembroke, in Stoney Creek, in Toronto, in Timmins and in Rexdale. Again, the American economy is enormously thirsty. Their prices, on average in almost all categories, are significantly higher than ours. So what do you suppose that means when the market gets to determine price? Prices are going up.

One of the issues that I have for my friend the Minister of Energy, who was here a while ago and undoubtedly will be returning, is, when are we going to be told that our market is going to open? It was supposed to open in November of this year. It has been delayed. Is it going to open in May of next year? Is it going to open in the fall of next year? It is important for that signal to be given, I say to the government, if the government intends to pursue its policy—

Mr Bisson: Let's not do it.

Mr Conway: My friend from Timmins says, "Let's not do it." I think there are some very real cautionary signs that should be heeded. The idea that we are opening a market that is having all kinds of problems in other jurisdictions, like Alberta and California, to name the two obvious ones, is probably a good place to start. There is indication now that the market is being manipulated in Alberta and in parts of the United States. There was a great article in last Sunday's New York Times called "California Screaming" by a noted American economist, Paul Krugman. I haven't got the time to read it in detail, but he talks about evidentiary material that clearly suggests that the market was gamed in Britain before it opened in the mid-1990s. It was similarly gamed in California before that market opened a couple of years ago.

There are very powerful players who have an interest now in manipulating the market to their own advantage. Have you been watching the California situation? Granted, it's the worst situation in the United States, but it ought to be a very real warning sign to all of us. Look at Alberta. The Alberta government, as it faces an election, is scrambling like the dickens to avoid the wrath of the consumers. Again, what's one of the problems in Alberta? No one is committing to build new plant. Without new plant, we are not going to see prices come down. Prices are going to go up.

One of the questions I have for my friend the Minister of Energy: when are you going to open the market in Ontario, and what protections are you going to put in place so that Ontario consumers are not going to be ripped and torn asunder by the vicissitudes and the manipulations of this continental market?

I'm glad the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations has returned, able and senior minister that he is, because across my desk late last week I got this press release from Bob Runciman saying that he and his department, together with Scotiabank, I think it was, were embarking on a campaign to make people aware of fraud in the marketplace—undoubtedly a good idea. Why isn't the government of Ontario doing what it was told to do three years ago about some rigorous public information for consumers before this electricity market opens up?

Everyone from the Consumers' Association to noted academics are saying, "For heaven's sakes, you can't send millions of residential, commercial and industrial consumers into this marketplace naked." But that's what we're doing. Good for the government that they're going to have a calendar to tell senior citizens and others about fraud, but I say to the minister of consumer affairs, have he and his colleague at energy talked about doing something to make the average residential customer aware of what it is they need to be aware of before this market opens up? We're doing nothing. For a market to work, you've got to have informed consumers. Do you think the Enrons of the world are going to be out there giving all of the information that a consumer in a place like Pembroke or Stoney Creek would want and need? Absolutely not.

The Minister of Energy says that's the energy board's responsibility. I think that's maybe part of the answer. All I know is we're very late in the day, and for the market to work, you've got to have an informed consumer. The government has done little, if anything, to provide useful, understandable information to the consumer. I repeat: this electricity deregulation is not only important, it is profoundly complicated and confusing.

Mr Crozier: And they'll get ripped off.

Mr Conway: And as my friend from south Essex says, a lot of consumers are going to get ripped off.

The other question that arises is the behaviour of our provincially owned electricity companies. The Minister of Finance goes apoplectic when you tell him that after the first year or so of the operations of his successor companies, things are not as well as expected. The Provincial Auditor told us about 10 days ago that he's looked at the books and he is concerned that the long-term plan of the government of Ontario to retire over \$20 billion worth of stranded debt is not airtight and in fact may leave the taxpayers on the hook for substantial liabilities downstream. I'm not surprised to hear that. I don't think anybody was ever going to be able to give an absolute guarantee.

But I'm very troubled by the auditor's look at the first year of the so-called acceptance company, the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. That's one of the successor

companies to the old Ontario Hydro that essentially is a financial acceptance company for all of the debt and related financial instruments to this new electricity marketplace. What are we told by the auditor—and I must say, people like Tom Adams over at Energy Probe have in fact corroborated what seems to be the auditor's conclusion. After the first year at the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp, we are told by certainly people at Energy Probe that the taxpayers have had to put in an additional \$235 million to cover the additional liabilities of that operation in the first year. We are told, and this is well-known, we've got one of the successor companies—and remember, we're talking about Hydro. We're talking about a company that began with a stranded debt of over \$20 billion. All a stranded debt is is the debt that cannot be carried by the commercial successors; that stranded debt has got to be paid for over time by consumers. Bill 152 makes it plain that the so-called "debt retirement charge," which is a part of paying down the stranded debt, is going to be paid by consumers. So make no mistake about who is going to be paying these bills: they are going to be paid by electricity consumers.

We have the spectacle of this new hydro order beginning with over \$20 billion worth of stranded debt. That's not an easy mountain to climb. It's certainly not all this government's fault, but what are they allowing Hydro One, one of their successor companies, to do? They're out buying up utilities large and small. The most recent big one was Brampton Hydro. They paid \$260 million of money they had to borrow, to buy a municipal utility they appeared not to need with borrowed money, and, we're told, at a premium price. What the hell is going on? We've got a bad situation and we're allowing it to get worse. Tom Adams points out, in his National Post article of November 17, that there's even less transparency today with these Hydro successor companies than there was in the bad old days.

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I say to my friends in this Legislature, government and opposition, this is our responsibility. This is on our watch. We are spending virtually no time looking at what's going on. I repeat: it's not easy, but it's hugely important. I wonder how much time is being spent in cabinet. Having been there, I understand the pressures of time and, particularly, the difficulties of trying to engage a subject of this complexity. We owe it to the electricity consumers of Ontario; we owe it to those who, like my friend from Peterborough, want to keep the good times going, to hold far more to account these hydro companies for what they're doing and not doing, because one of the blackest clouds on the Ontario economic horizon is this electricity reform. We were told prices would go down. It is manifestly the case that they're not going down in the short- and intermediate-term. I think this Legislature has got to get on with doing a better job of holding the hydro companies to account for what they're doing to us.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bisson: To the member from Renfrew, I agree with you. First of all, he says, "When are we going to

hear when the government is going to come in and actually do the deregulation in the Ontario market?" As I yelled out during his speech, I hope not, because quite frankly in the examples we've seen in Alberta and other places where they have gone in and deregulated the market, hydro rates are now starting to go up, for exactly the reason he makes in his comments, and that is that there are people who stand to gain—and I would argue probably in the billions of dollars—of profit in a deregulated market. Unfortunately, those who are going to be stuck paying the bills are be the consumers of the province of Ontario, and that is both residential consumers and industrial consumers.

I think that is bad for the economy. In fact, just recently, we're now starting to see in Alberta, where they've already gone ahead and done what Mike Harris has done in Ontario—they've actually done the step of deregulating the hydro side and privatizing—they're now seeing that residential and industrial users are going before the Alberta government and saying, "Re-regulate it, because you made a mistake. Ralph Klein, come clean. Tell people you were wrong and re-regulate the industry." I find that's quite telling, coming from the industrial sector.

I would also argue when it comes to the issue of deregulation—something that this government, the Conservatives, are very fond of—the facts are and the proof is that deregulation does not always work. If we look at the trucking industry, deregulation has been a mess for the truck drivers of the province of Ontario and those who own the trucks. Who has gained? It has been the shippers. If we take a look at what happened in the energy sector when it comes to gas, well, my God, just go to a gas pump and see what's happened over the past number of years. Yes, part of that is OPEC, but also part of it is getting rid of programs like the national energy program.

I believe that deregulation is wrong for the sake of just doing it, and in fact in this case we're going to pay more.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): It's a pleasure to comment on the speech given by the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. It's amazing how quickly the political sands shift beneath our feet. I've only been elected about a year and a half, and when I first came into the House, I was told that the tax cuts wouldn't create jobs and I was told that the tax cuts were bad, and yet now we see that even the federal government is doing the tax cuts. I was also told that we weren't spending enough money on education, we weren't spending enough money on health care, we weren't spending enough money anywhere and that we had cut, cut, cut. Now of course, we find out that we're spending more than any previous government. So it's amazing how the sands shift beneath us.

There was a gathering down in the United States at Duke University. They were speaking about the economy and a well-known individual stood up and made this statement about the tax system for Canada. He said our tax system is now very competitive with the Americans.

"If you look at Ontario, the income tax in Ontario, provincial and federal together, is competitive with New York, Michigan, California and the state of Washington. Corporate tax too. But the payroll tax in Canada is much lower than in the US."

The esteemed individual who was making that statement was the Right Honourable Mr Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada. So at this particular point in time even the Prime Minister of Canada is now stating that Ontario's tax system is, by and large, far better than the other provinces in the country and has made it very clear that Ontario's income tax system is competitive with New York, Michigan, California and Washington.

Quite clearly, we have done our job in Ontario. What I do find fascinating is the shifting sand, that as we move through this process, we're not spending enough; now we're spending too much; tax cuts don't create jobs; but then again they do.

Mr Crozier: I'm pleased to rise and comment on my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke's statement to the House here this evening. There are few in this House who would give more credit where credit is due than would my colleague Mr Conway. There are also few in this House who could so eloquently warn the government of where some of the pitfalls may be. I think he has done that this evening.

Maybe the sands have changed. Maybe some of us didn't give enough credit where it was due at the beginning because we were concerned. I can recall when Mike Harris was the leader of the third party and he said, "This province is bankrupt." So when he came in with tax cuts, I said to myself, "What business would start out, when getting its financial house in order, if it were bankrupt, by giving its shareholders a dividend?" That was my only question at the time. Why not get the financial house in order first, then give the dividend? It was a question of timing. If it has worked out that it has been more beneficial that way, all the better.

I think what we have to do is take heed of what Mr Conway has said tonight, particularly in the area of energy. He gave some examples. This evening in California there very well might be brownouts because of the problems they're having. That's what we have to be careful of and avoid.

I think of the north when it comes to high energy prices. I can only think that these high energy prices are going to be devastating to the north. What's it going to do to their economy? We have to think of that. We have to be prepared to continue to shift the sands so that we attempt to do the right thing in the near- and long-term future.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Just out of respect for the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, I want to respond to his remarks. I have some respect for the comments he made.

I just want to move back a little bit. This is about budget and about Finance Minister Ernie Eves's statement. I was quite surprised to hear the lack of sound from the member from Scarborough-Agincourt, because really

it's clear: the revenue is up about \$14 billion to \$15 billion. It isn't all because of Premier Harris and Finance Minister Eves, but certainly doing the right things at the right time are absolutely important. I think we complemented many decisions to the extent where the federal government is now copying some of the capital gains tax initiatives we've started. In fact, they're looking at the whole tax-cuts-create-jobs initiative. Imitation is the best form of flattery.

But I think the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke makes a very good point. The breaking down of Ontario Hydro, as he would know—he's been the critic and has followed this for many years—probably was a good way to reconcile all the debt they had accumulated, and it was stranded debt on top of that, and that was a problem for whoever formed the government. But I think what's happened, by breaking it into generation—which is what we call OPG today, Ontario Power Generation—on that side the equation is working. I believe there is investment and competition, there are tax rule changes to encourage more environmental friendliness, and those are all the right things to do on the generation side. There were big investments just announced last week in Sarnia.

On the distribution side I agree with him wholeheartedly. I'm one who championed Veridian, the first in my area to go and form some local boards and take over two or three municipal—but when I look at what's happening, and you countered it in your remarks, I too question where the money is coming from. And who's going to underwrite that debt unless they're a publicly traded company?

So it's a very good debate, but overall the government is on the right track. By having revenues increase, jobs are up. What more could you ask for?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Well, Speaker—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Just one second. We've had four. I'm losing track. The member for—

Mr Conway: I wanted to make a couple of quick observations.

First to my friend from Stoney Creek: listen, we will find out the strength and the durability of the new financial architecture after we have a couple of quarters of poor economic performance. It may be that they will never come, in which case this government has entered Elysium and has nothing to worry about. But it may be that we have a few quarters of negative or very slow growth. We may then find ourselves at the exchequer looking at a very different prospect. I hope it doesn't happen, but I'll tell you, looking at the second-quarter statements, it won't take much to turn this thing from black to red ink.

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I want to finally say, about energy, that there was no choice for the government of Ontario in the mid-1990s. We had to embark upon a new approach. I agreed in the beginning with what I thought was the government's intention, which was to create competition in the generation of electricity. That's where they started out, but they

have not pursued that objective. Crazily, they have now bought into this maniacal scheme that's been fathered and mothered over at the new Hydro that we have to monopolize, particularly in the distribution sector. That's insanity. The price of electricity will only come down when you get more generation into the system. That's the problem across the continent. It's not an easy problem to fix. The old order had to be altered. I voted against Bill 35 two years ago because I just was not confident, on the basis of a lot of testimony, that the government's plan was consistent with the Legislature's objective. I am now very worried that the economic health and prosperity of this province are in dire jeopardy.

We were told by the energy board just a couple of months ago that, with no change, Ontario Hydro customers are going to see, minimally, a 13% rate increase once the freeze is lifted and the market opens, and I think the increase is going to be substantially more than 13%. I hope—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Galt: It's certainly a pleasure to be able to speak on Bill 152, the Balanced Budgets for Brighter Futures Act. There's no question that with the finances, what has happened in the province of Ontario, brighter futures certainly are in store. I was interested in listening to the member from Essex comment about a bankrupt province, what our Premier said prior to 1995. He was absolutely right: we were headed into bankruptcy. But I would suggest that the member from Essex have a look at Economics 101, and look at elasticity of demand and elasticity of supply. I think he would start to understand why reduced taxes increase activity, create jobs and we end up with more revenue. The very opposite occurred in the early 1990s: when taxes were increased we ended up with far less revenue. I'm pleased to hear the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke talking about competition and that competition is good, particularly with the power generation companies.

I think we're in good shape in the province of Ontario, mainly because of the hard work of our Premier, being so committed to attracting investment into Ontario and also at the same time improving the quality of life that we as Ontarians are now able to enjoy. I know the opposition and special interest groups would really like to see Ontario again go backwards, and that's exactly where we would be if in fact we listened to them. We vowed to keep Ontario strong and we are committed to a brighter future in this province.

It's been interesting, in the last month or so, being in several Santa Claus parades in my riding and observing the crowds out to see those parades. As a matter of fact, those crowds have been record-sized, crowds never seen in these communities before, like Campbellford and Quinte West, parades in Brighton and Cobourg, Colborne and Port Hope and Warkworth. Some of those have initiated new-style evening parades, particularly in Warkworth and Colborne. I did miss the one in the village of Hastings, unfortunately. It didn't matter which commun-

ity I was in, it was a change from the parades of 1995 and 1996, where people were just standing there, glum. Now there are cheery-looking people with smiling faces. People were chattering along the parade routes, something I had not heard in the other years, particularly back in the mid-1990s.

I suggest that the change in these crowds is a result of the economy that's been created in this province, the improved government efficiency. As a result of that we've increased the number of jobs. People are much happier, of course, when they have jobs.

This booming economy is part of why those jobs are there. The members in the opposition ask why. Well, we go back to the economy being stimulated with those tax cuts, even though they wouldn't want to admit it. With the tax cuts, of course, it's just like an automatic raise when you're working, a tax-free allowance sort of thing, and that's happened right across the board, particularly for those with low incomes, with hundreds of thousands of Ontarians not having to pay a provincial portion of income tax and tremendous cuts for many others, and also enjoying the \$200 tax rebate that all Ontarians received, provided they had paid at least \$200 in income tax during this past year.

It's interesting to be in the shopping malls and in the various stores and to see people buying gifts for loved ones, something they really didn't have the money for some five or six years ago. That in itself is stimulating the economy, those dollars pouring in, of course coming from the extra money in their pockets because of those tax cuts.

I have to apologize to my Liberal friends, because there are some traffic jams around these parking lots. Sometimes you have to park way on the far side of the parking lot and walk a long way to get to the stores, but that's what happens when people have extra money and they're buying goods. I have to also apologize to them for some of the traffic jams on the highways, because there are 830,000 more people working than were working in 1995. I know there are goods being moved in transports; there's a record number of transports on the highways that are moving those goods. So I say to the members in the opposition, I'm sorry there are so many people out there with extra money who are able to buy all those goods, but that's just the way it goes when there is a booming economy stimulated by those tax cuts.

I'd like to spend a few minutes talking about the brighter futures that have resulted because of some of the major projects in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, particularly through the rural job strategy fund. That's a three-year, \$30-million fund that was kicked off back in 1997. This is a fund that was designed to invest in projects that would improve the quality enhancement in community marketing and information technology; also to increase exports, lead to investment, contribute to rural economic development and create alliances and partnerships in those communities.

That's exactly what's happened in my riding. Last April, the minister, the Honourable Ernie Hardeman, was

there to announce a \$1.65-million project over two years to create some 1,000 jobs in that great riding of Northumberland. A lot of hard work went into this, developing the protocol to put forward to the ministry as well as making these projects work. Certainly my congratulations to them.

The project was broken into five categories. The first one is Spirit of the Hills, which is a partnership with the arts community. One that really stands out in my mind is the Westben Arts Festival Theatre. They have built a barn. It's a not-for-profit organization. They put on musical productions during the month of July, and this coming summer it's going to expand. There's tremendous professionalism and tremendous volunteer participation in this project. I can tell you that this theatre, just a little west of Campbellford, has ignited the entire community. They're bringing in phenomenal artists, musicians from Toronto and Montreal, and they are adding a lot to the riding of Northumberland.

The second one I'd mention is Revitalizing Downtown Northumberland, and that's going on in Port Hope, Hastings, Campbellford, Cobourg, Colborne and Gore's Landing.

There's also Heritage in Northumberland County. That's about some of the museums, such as the Cobourg Military Museum and the great Farini Circus Museum, as well as the Roseneath Carousel.

The fourth of the five groupings that have brought dollars in is Tourism Events for All Seasons, some six events that are co-operating and working together in a joint marketing strategy. Now they won't be battling with each other for those tourism dollars but rather working together to bring in busloads of people to tour the county, see the various things such as Northumberland Lights, the Warkworth Rodeo, the Rural Ramble and several of the fairs that are held in Northumberland. There is also Tour the Country in the County. This is an expanded, customized group tour, a pooling of their marketing dollars. It involves organizations like Eastview Farms, the Northumberland apple route, River Country and the Heritage Shores Association.

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There has been a lot of gnashing of teeth. I just wanted to make a few comments about this gnashing of teeth over the cost of electricity, particularly by the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. We went from having one of the cheapest electricity rates in North America back in 1985 to in 1995 having one of the most expensive. The Ford Motor Co told us we went from the first in their 17 regions where they produce cars to the 14th-most expensive. The rates, in the early 1990s were absolutely spiralling out of control. Did we do the perfect thing? That I don't know, but something certainly had to be done to get that \$30-billion-plus debt that Ontario Hydro had.

In closing, compliments to our Premier for his leadership and hard work, for attracting investment and a better quality of life to the province of Ontario. Thanks to the Ontario rural job strategy fund for making life better for

the people of Northumberland. The government has the right plan to create a strong and growing economy in this great province of Ontario. Just in my last minutes I'd like to wish all of my constituents in Northumberland a very merry Christmas and a very happy and prosperous new year.

Mr Sergio: Just a couple of comments in the brief two minutes that I have to respond. Let me say that at this particular time I wish we had a government, that we had a Premier who really would be concerned with the people's people, those people who need a real hand up, especially at this particular time of the year.

I want to address this to the Premier himself: do you know how many calls I've had from seniors saying, "When am I going to get my \$200?" This would have been a wonderful time, and what a deed it would have been on behalf of the government and the Premier to say to the seniors, "Yes, indeed, we owe you big-time. Here is a couple of hundred dollars." But do you know what they say when they don't get the \$200 or \$100 or \$50? "They take from us, but then when it comes time to really look at us, they don't give us anything." Especially now, look outside, how cold the weather is. Our member for Renfrew just said gas is going to go up, electricity is going to go up. We read the papers; they read the papers like we do, and they say, "Everything is going up. Now we're going to be spending another \$600 to \$800 more this season on top of all the expenses, on top of all the cuts, on top of all the user fees that the government has been unloading on us, and the government is not doing anything to assist us."

This would have been a wonderful opportunity, going into the holiday period: assist the most needy people in our society. But instead we have a government that is bent on not giving a hand up to those people who really need it. We have so many thousands of children living in poverty. They won't have a gift this Christmas. Are they thinking about that?

To the members who say, "We have another 800,000 people spending money," I wonder where they are. I think this is a good time for the Premier and the government to rethink their position.

Mr Bisson: I listened to the member for Northumberland and I repeat what has been said here before, that the government members are really fond of getting up and trying to crow about just how much good their government has done when it comes to building the economy of Ontario. But I just warn you, we can now see the signs coming by way of the predictors—the predictors that say we're going to be having problems with our economy. One predictor is that exports, when it comes to lumber, are down. We're seeing less production of lumber going on now. We're also seeing what's happening in the auto industry.

So I say to the member across the way, is he going to be standing up here afterwards saying this was the result of his government and his government's policy when we do see the next cycle come? That's the problem: they're a bunch of revisionists. They really believe the bunk that

they put forward as being the gospel truth. The reality is that the Ontario economy is affected by the cycles of the North American and the world economy. That explains a lot of what we saw through the 1980s and 1990s.

To the issue of hydro, I say to the member across the way, he gets up and talks about the wonderful job they've done with hydro. Number one, it was the Bob Rae government that froze hydro rates. We did that in 1992-93. It wasn't Mike Harris. Number two is, you guys have moved to deregulate and to privatize Ontario Hydro, something that we're now seeing in Alberta and we've already seen in California, where it's been done before and been nothing but disaster at the consumer level, both when it comes to individuals and when it comes to industry itself.

So I just say to the member across the way, I would have thought he'd have learned a bit of humility after his last little exploit in the House. It's pretty apparent that he didn't. If he plans on getting to cabinet, this is certainly not the way to do it.

Mr Hastings: As usual, it's absolutely fascinating listening to the voices across the way. The member for Timmins-James Bay is one of the first to recite how great the Bob Rae government was, so they're in the same mantra as they were six years ago. If I recall, back in 1991-92 we had something called the recession. The recession was pretty devastating to the people in this province, at whatever station in life.

What did we do? The great solution then was to pump-prime the whole economy: spend, put more money into the whole operation. So they upped the deficit to at least \$100 billion. But that was OK. Then we hear the story from the members opposite that the real reason for jobs in this province has hardly anything to do with tax reduction. So, as I've said before at least eight times in the last two years—except the member for Hamilton West. He did actually accept the challenge once to the thesis that a high-taxed jurisdiction does not necessarily bring about economic progress, does not bring about the huge number of jobs that the private sector has created in this province.

To the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, it's interesting to hear that he cites the story about Hydro, but we have seldom heard a specific solution from the Grits opposite as to what they would be doing if they were here in the given circumstances of a deregulated hydro situation throughout North America. Would we go back to re-freezing rates? Is that where he's at? Is he also proposing that we wall off Ontario from the North American economy? I'm doubtful if you can do that, even if you wish it. Let's get real over there for once.

Mr Conway: I'm happy to say again that I think the government of Ontario was given advice a couple of years ago that it chose not to follow. The absolute key to energy at the present moment is creating an environment where there is going to be more, not less, generating capacity. The government was told by the Macdonald group and others that that was the cornerstone to good policy. What we've now got is a situation where we've

got a bigger Hydro. We've got the remonopolization over on the distribution side.

The member for Guelph is here. She was a minister for a few years a couple of years ago. Was there anybody talking in 1995-97 about making Ontario Hydro Retail bigger? Nobody. And making it bigger with borrowed money? Nobody.

Mr Young: You sound like the mayor of Toronto.

Mr Conway: Listen, this is complicated stuff. I want to say that one of the things that gets the political class a bad name—I have to say it, and it's not all on one side of the House—is when we get some apparently bright, well-educated, professional person getting up here just mouthing a bunch of transparently insulting platitudes about 1985-95, that before there was an abyss and after that there was just unrelieved joy and prosperity. Irving Layton had a phrase for that kind of politics: nauseous crapperoo. We just owe it to ourselves and to our constituents, and particularly when you are a doctor of veterinary medicine, to treat the Legislature and the people of Ontario with something more than the kind of contempt that can be taken from those kinds of remarks. The electricity issue deserves more than that kind of partisan, platitudinous, nauseous crapperoo.

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The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Galt: Thank you, Speaker, and thanks in particular to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for his very kind and thoughtful remarks. Also, thanks to the members for York West and Timmins-James Bay, and particularly to my good friend from Etobicoke North.

I notice the member for York West was talking quite a bit about poverty, saying, "If there are 830,000 jobs, where is the money coming from? Where are they?" Have a look at the revenue. Have a look at what's coming in the budget: approximately \$10 billion more revenue coming in than in 1995. That's a pretty significant increase in revenue to the province, and it has to be coming from somebody who's out there working. Particularly when you take into account the tax cuts, the ones who were working before are actually paying less.

The member for Timmins-James Bay talked about the economic cycle, and he's absolutely right. When the economy is bitten or something happens to the Americans and it goes down, yes, Ontario is going to be affected. But how that's going to be handled and how it'll play out depends on what we do, just as we did in 1995. Will we go down as fast as the Americans? It's hard to say. It depends on the kind of economic policies we have in Ontario whether we go down like we did in the early 1990s, when you tried to spend your way out of a recession—disastrous direction; it didn't work.

Hydro has been beaten on here, but with what we were faced with in 1995, a debt of over \$30 billion—yes, I give the NDP credit for having at least frozen the rates to the consumer, but at the same time nothing more was done. Sooner or later, something had to happen, and we have taken the bull by the horns, so to speak, and are trying, through what we are doing, to make rates more competitive into the future.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I'm always amazed by the titles this government puts on bills. I see it's the Balanced Budgets for Brighter Futures Act. What a wonderful title. It's so nice. But it's like when you see a glass. You look inside and it's all dirty.

I've got a few minutes and I want to bring it down to the level where I can understand and many of my constituents can get at this ramble about legislative process. Let's talk about the debt. This wonderful, responsible government said they took over the accounts of this province and they were in chaos, that they had a huge debt on their hands. Now they're in their second term, and they're so buoyant about the economy and so much revenue is coming in. You would feel that if other governments had made a huge debt and handed it to them, they would say, "The first thing I'm going to do is pay down this debt." Do you understand that the debt did not reduce, it increased? The people across this province are saying, "This is the"—

Interjection: How much?

Mr Curling: I'll soon tell you the amount. It has increased. Just to finance the larger debt they have created, they pay \$8.9 billion for interest to keep the debt going. That's only the interest, so you can start calculating. If this is a responsible government, they should be paying far less on a reduced debt. But they're paying more. Why are they paying more on the debt? Because the debt has increased. But that doesn't make sense. This government is supposed to have a brighter future for the people of this province.

When the children who are here today have grown up and have jobs, they will have a debt on their hands. If they were to start working today—let me speak to the children, the young people here today. If you get a job right now—this government has over a \$120-billion debt. They have increased it. They're going to say to you, "What a bright future I'm handing to young people here and to your parents across this province. I've given you greater debt." Many of them, especially the Minister of Community and Social Services, would say, "Look what we have done: we have given these people jobs." But they have also said, "Look what we have done: all the corporations are now paying far less taxes. Whoopee." They are paying far less to all the people on welfare in order to do far more debt.

Their responsibility has increased, and they have taken that kind of money from the people who need it most to finance the big corporations. You'd think that even if they did that they would have tried to pay off some of that money. You see, in this kind of government it's the poor who have caused this great debt. But let me tell the young people too: do you realize that those big corporations owe more taxes to the government that would have paid off all the debt it has, if they would just pay their taxes? But this government would not do that. If they did that, they would be offending the people who are sponsoring them, who come to their fundraisers. If they turn them off and tell them to pay their taxes, we can balance our budget for a brighter future.

The brighter future they speak of is not for people outside today, whom the member from Renfrew spoke of eloquently. They are cold today and they'll be colder tomorrow because they can't pay their heating bill, because this government has privatized and deregulated and said to the private sector, "Go ahead. It's all about profit." It's nothing about warmth. It's nothing about keeping the constituents they were elected to protect. They are there to protect the pockets of the corporations, to say, "Make more money, more profits. Then, when we have enough, what we'll do"—when you go to university they'll tell you it's called the trickle-down theory. When they have eaten enough, they won't eat any more; they'll pass it on.

If they build big, exotic homes, then later on they'll build homes that are affordable for those at the bottom. But those in the lower strata are not able to afford the houses up there. They have to wait in the cold, not only while they're waiting for the cost of homes, which is escalating, but the heating bills are greater.

You wonder about the brighter future this government has envisioned for this province, that they have selected the constituents they want a brighter future for: "We'll make a brighter future for anyone who is making millions of dollars." They will hear the jingle of Santa Claus. Of course, they are laughing all the way, all the elves who are following. These are the elves of the corporations, who are running around making sure the stockings of the corporate factors are filled. They say, "Ho, ho, ho, what a merry Christmas I have given you all."

The people you were elected by—are you supporting those who are discouraged and disillusioned and those who are disabled and need the support of a government, because you've taken their taxes to do so? No. The brighter future means the debt has gone up. We're going to balance what budget? What budget are you going to balance? Is it only one side of the budget that you balance? I thought a balance meant all factors. I thought you paid off your debt, and then you had a balanced budget. But you don't have a balanced budget. You have greater debt that you will pass on to our young people later, who will be paying a higher finance.

Interjection.

Mr Curling: My colleague asks where I took economics. It's easy to say, "We've taken economics." If I am paying more now to finance my debt, if I owe more, my economics tell me you're in greater problems. You are in greater problems today because you owe more.

Mr Speaker, I know you would like me to wrap up because it's 6 o'clock. Of course, in my generous heart I'd like to wish my colleagues merry Christmas, but don't forget the poor. Ho, ho, ho, Merry Christmas. I'd like to say to those who are cold outside that this government has the ability to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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First Session, 37th Parliament

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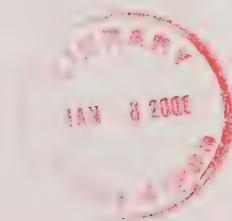
Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 18 December 2000

Lundi 18 décembre 2000



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 18 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 18 décembre 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTECTION ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA PROTECTION CONTRE LA VIOLENCE FAMILIALE

Mr Wilson, on behalf of Mr Flaherty, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to better protect victims of domestic violence / Projet de loi 117, Loi visant à mieux protéger les victimes de violence familiale.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Brenda Elliott): Pursuant to the order of the House, dated December 5, 2000, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr Wilson has moved third reading of Bill 117. Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry?

All those in favour say "aye."

All those opposed say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

SUPPLY ACT, 2000

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2000

Mr Wilson, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2001 / Projet de loi 169, Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2001.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Elliott): Mr Wilson.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Madam Speaker, my colleague the member for Kitchener Centre, Mr Wettlaufer, would like to address this bill.

1850

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I'm really pleased to be able to speak to Bill 169 tonight. As we're aware, this is a money bill. We're talking about the expenditures of this government. Certainly the people on this side of the House believe that these expenditures are very wise expenditures. The people on the other side of

the House, the Liberals and the NDP, are going to think that they are not so wise, but of course, they have always spoken against every money bill that this government has brought forward; it doesn't matter what that money bill was.

This afternoon, on another issue, we heard members of the opposition talking about the increases in expenditures by this government, how they had been so large. I would like to point out that we have had some considerable increases in expenditures by this government over the past five years. The total budget has increased from \$54.5 billion to some \$62 billion. Most of that increase has been in health care. We have had an increase from \$17.4 billion in 1995 under the previous government to some \$22 billion this year. That's not even taking into account what the federal government said they were going to "increase," and all that is is recouping the amounts they have cut over the last few years. They're going to increase the monies back to the province of Ontario.

We haven't seen that money yet. The people of Ontario do not realize that this government has not seen any of that projected increase from the federal government. We won't see that money until next year. We won't see it in January or February or March. We're not going to see that money until April of next year. In spite of that, however, this government has increased health care spending each year—it's been in power since 1995—such that, in this fiscal year, we are spending \$22 billion on health care.

I was in Kitchener Centre, in my riding, this past Friday, when we announced—

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): It's about time.

Mr Wettlaufer: I say to the member from Timmins-James Bay, I think I'm in my riding a whole lot more than you are. Mind you, I realize it's because I'm closer, but I'm there at least once a week, sometimes two and three times a week. The people of my riding know of my commitment to my riding.

Anyway, I was back in my riding last Friday, and at that time the Minister of Health made two announcements. She made a capital announcement in the amount of \$35 million for St Mary's hospital. She made another announcement of \$39 million at Grand River Hospital.

I want to explain the significance—

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: I say to my friend the member from Peterborough that I can hear him over me.

The significance of these expenditures—these investments, if you will—in my riding is that for the past 14, 15 years, all our governments knew of the needs in health care in the riding of Kitchener Centre and the surrounding area, known as Waterloo region—the Liberal Party knew about it when they were in power and the NDP knew about it when they were in power. But they did not make those investments. We had a very serious shortage in health care in our region, particularly in my riding of Kitchener Centre.

I want to explain that by the time the cancer care centre at the Grand River Hospital in Kitchener is complete, it will be servicing 100,000 trips per year. That's people who have been going to London, to Hamilton, to Toronto and to Buffalo, not for the last five years, as the members of the opposition would want you to believe, but for the last 15 years, under the Liberal Party and under the NDP. Because those two parties shortchanged our area so badly in health care, we have had to undergo very considerable restructuring in our area. We've had investments in cardiac care, we've had investments in cancer care, we've had investments in MRI, in dialysis, and on and on. Because of the shortage of long-range planning by both of those parties, the riding of Kitchener Centre and the surrounding area were severely shortchanged, and they make like we should be able to turn it around like that. Well, it doesn't happen. They didn't plan for 10 years. How in heaven's name are you going to turn it around like that?

Doctors weren't graduating because of the freeze put on by the previous NDP government, so therefore we have a shortage of doctors. How do we reconcile that in one year or two years or three years? You don't reconcile it. You turned off the tap, I say to the members of the NDP. Doctors weren't going to medical school because they weren't going to graduate. So what happens? We have to turn the tap back on. It takes four, five, six, seven or even eight years to graduate those doctors. Are we going to turn it around like that? No. We're going to have a shortage for another few years, thanks to the misguided policies of the NDP.

The Liberals talk as if everything was rosy under the Liberal Party. It was so rosy that they thought they could get away with spending \$17 billion a year on health care. That's what they said in their red book in 1995. We've increased spending in health care, and they criticize us.

You talk about management of health care resources. There was so much that needed to be done that we had to increase health care spending dramatically. Will that need still be there a year, two years, five years from now? Yes, it will. Would it have been so severe had they managed health care—health care funding, health care resources—while they were in power? Probably not. We would still have had to increase health care spending. Would it have been necessary to increase it so dramatically, so quickly? Probably not.

We set up the Health Services Restructuring Commission shortly after we came to power in 1995. The goal was to restructure the health care system to prepare and

to provide for future needs. We established a team of health care professionals. Is there something wrong with that? The NDP would probably say, "Yes, it was wrong because they weren't civil servants; they weren't unionized members of the government civil service." We thought it was more important to bring in health care professionals, people who knew the system, people who knew what was necessary, people who could assist the government in its long-range planning, assist us in preparing for future needs.

The Liberals were opposed. They wanted the situation left as it was. They had no suggestions of accountability. I guess they thought the previous system was accountable. They're wrong.

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In 1995 a noted doctor at St Mary's hospital in Kitchener said the health care facilities in Kitchener were equivalent to Third World standards. How nice. One of the most dynamic economic regions of the country, and our health care facilities, prior to our coming to power, were equated to those of Third World standards. That was as a result of 10 years of bad planning.

I mentioned before that we have new MRIs in our region; we have a new cancer treatment centre and a new cardiac care centre. These are being built right now, as we speak. We have new kidney dialysis equipment. We have stabilized funding for hospital operations. We have the greatest investment in our community in a quarter of a century. The health care budget of this province for the coming year: \$22.3 billion. It's the largest in the history of the province and it will work through the individual health care budget items.

I'd like to talk about some of these investments: \$1 billion invested in hospitals to accelerate capital restructuring; \$150 million for new information systems for transition to primary care networks; \$100 million over four years to expand primary care; \$110 million for improved medical supervision in home care settings and improved psychiatric services.

I'm saying these rather rapidly and I'm rolling over them—millions, we're talking here. What I've said is \$150 million, \$100 million, \$54 million, \$1 billion. Then we have \$180 million for the system management fund; shifting \$75 million to transfer doctors in academic health science centres to alternate payment plans; \$45 million at maturity for expanding telehealth; \$4 million for free tuition to medical students willing to practise in rural and northern areas; increasing the number of spaces for medical students; tripling Ontario Innovation Trust by an additional endowment of \$500 million for research infrastructure, including cancer research facilities; \$30 million for the development of a comprehensive plan to prevent stroke and treat and rehabilitate victims; \$10 million for a patients' bill of rights.

Tying hospital funding to service performance; \$235 million for the hospital sector, primarily for transitional issues as health care restructuring continues; \$21 million over three years for projects testing blood conservation and bloodless surgery techniques; \$10 million over two

years for the health integration program; a \$6-million annual increase to strengthen detection, investigation and prosecution of individuals defrauding the health care system; \$3.5 million to bridge training for foreign-trained nurses and other professionals to meet Ontario licensing standards.

One million dollars to provide treatment of tuberculosis for persons not covered by medical insurance and for equipment to double the enrolment of MRI technologists at the Michener Institute; pilots for reform of Ontario's health rehabilitation system; \$6 million in annual funding to provide education and training for level 2 neonatal units to hospital staff. Millions upon—

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): It hurts my ears.

Mr Wettlaufer: It hurts your ears. I know it does. I say to the member from—all these ridings I've never been able to get caught up on. Mario, you're the member from York West. I know it hurts your ears. You don't like to hear about all these millions being spent on health care, but this is what we're doing. It has been necessary to do so.

Mr Sergio: Wayne, you're making a disaster.

Mr Wettlaufer: I heard you say it hurts your ears.

While this government was increasing the health care budget, what were the federal Liberals doing? They cut the health care transfer payments to this province. What did the provincial Liberals do? The provincial Liberals never uttered a word to their federal cousins. They're not uttering a word now either, because they know it's true.

What do the health care professionals think of our budget? What do the health care professionals think of our direction?

Mr Clark: Tell us, Wayne.

Mr Wettlaufer: I will tell you. David MacKinnon, president of the Ontario Hospital Association, called the budget "a very significant step forward." Oh, they're laughing. The opposition party is laughing. "Apart from a million dollars in new money for hospitals, the conversion of \$400 million in one-time funding from last year into the base budget will allow hospitals to plan ahead," he said. "The additional funding and the predictability are the biggest step forward in the last three or four years." He said that in May 2000.

Dr Ron Wexler, president of the Ontario Medical Association said, "Today's provincial budget is a significant reinvestment in health care for Ontario and is a vital step in the process of beginning to fix our health care system."

Not exactly partial people. They're impartial. They're concerned about the future of the health care system. They're health care experts. So which government and which party has been truly committed to providing Ontario with the strongest health care system in the history of the province? There is no doubt it has been our government and our party.

Hospitals have been hoping to ease the ER crunch. They recognize that is a concern. In today's Toronto Sun, in an article by Jennifer Bill, Cyndy DeGuisti of the Hospital for Sick Children said that "emergency rooms

don't operate on a first-come, first-served basis. ... Patients with life-threatening conditions are seen first, she said, and it's 'frustrating for people to sit in an emergency department for a long time.'"

The Ontario Hospital Association is issuing an information kit to help people recognize when emergency care is needed. Emergency care identifiers include severe pain, tightness in the chest, broken bones or wounds requiring stitches, choking, breathing problems and high fevers in infants or young children. These are indications of why people would normally go to an emergency room. However, we all know many other instances of people using emergency rooms. Many go because they're suffering from the flu or some other virus, or maybe a bacterial infection. It could be any number of things, but in many cases people sit in emergency rooms for two, three or four hours, not because of the crisis in emergency rooms but because they are not using emergency rooms for the reason they were intended.

We also found that people who are there for three or four hours are having to wait because theirs are not what the emergency room staff consider to be emergency crises. They're not what the Ontario Hospital Association calls emergency care identifiers: they're not severe pain or tightness in the chest, they're not broken bones or wounds requiring stitches, they're not choking or breathing problems or high fevers in infants or young children.

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We are trying to reconcile some of the problems with the additional investments we are making. The health care providers are doing the same thing. The health care providers realize that we are doing the best we possibly can do as a government to improve the health care system in this province. The health care providers realize it was a lack of planning for a very long time that got the health care situation into a bit of a problem. They realize that our government is going to take some time to rectify those problems. They are willing to work with us, and they are quite pleased with the progress we have made; witness David MacKinnon's comments.

Much of what we have done as a government has been to improve the economy. Much of what we have done as a government has been to decrease poverty, to increase jobs, and we have been successful in that regard.

Just today I received a letter from Trade Missions International. It was dated December 8 and signed by Mark Adler, managing director. He started off the letter,

"Dear Mr Wettlaufer,

"As you know, under the leadership of Premier Harris, Ontario is now one of the most attractive and competitive jurisdictions in which to do business anywhere in the world. A direct beneficiary of these policies is the province's export sector. Currently, total exports represent 52% of the province's GDP and support more than one and a half million jobs. In the last four years, increases in net exports have been responsible for 20% of Ontario's economic growth—and more exports mean more jobs."

That is a very lovely endorsement of what our government has done to provide jobs, to provide an environment in which an economy can prosper. Whether the members of the opposition parties want to believe it or not, it does decrease poverty.

We don't have to go very far. There are figures in the news media every day, whether it be the television media, whether it be the broadcast media or whether it be the news media, the press, to indicate how this government has improved the economy to such an extent that we are the leading jurisdiction in all of the G8—the leading jurisdiction. Now, the members of the opposition are going to say, “Look at how well the American economy has been doing. All our trade is with the United States. Because the American economy is booming right along, therefore Ontario's is.” If that's the case, then why hasn't the economy of British Columbia been booming at the same rate?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Because they don't produce cars.

Mr Wettlaufer: Because they don't produce what the Americans want and they don't have a tax environment in which business can prosper. They also have a job problem in British Columbia, I say to the member for Windsor-Essex. They have an unemployment problem.

Mr Crozier: Essex.

Mr Wettlaufer: What is it? Oh, just the member for Essex; thank you.

They don't have full employment. We're sitting at 4.7% unemployment in Ontario. That's getting very, very close to what is considered in economic terms full employment. In Kitchener, my riding, we have 4.3% unemployment. Employers tell me every day they cannot hire enough staff. They're telling me right now that we have full employment in Kitchener Centre. If 4.3% is full employment, 4.7% in the province is pretty good.

Now compare 4.7% unemployment to the heady days when the Liberals were in power in the late 1980s. I don't know how to tell you this, member from Essex, but our employment rate is better now than in the heady days of the late 1980s in your administration. We all know that our unemployment rate here is much better than it was during the days of the NDP government.

In 1995 we won an election with tax cuts as a central plank. The law of diminishing returns indicated that we were not getting the production with all those high taxes we were paying. There was not the return from taxes that there should have been. We reduced taxes; we increased government revenues. We increased them considerably, Mr Speaker—you know that; I see you smiling—and that is a case that can be made in many nations around the world. When taxes came down, revenues increased. The people of Ontario thought that was a pretty good idea. They agreed with our policies. In 1999 we gave them commitments of additional tax cuts, and the people of Ontario continued to agree. They re-elected our government.

I want to repeat that Ontario has the fastest-growing economy among all jurisdictions in the G8. It doesn't

matter whether we're talking provincial, state or national jurisdictions; Ontario's is the fastest-growing. Members of the opposition want to keep harping about a recession. They're saying, “Oh, one is coming.” Well, they also said we wouldn't be able to meet our job targets within the first mandate. We not only met the job targets in Ontario; we exceeded them.

We call that opposition party over there the Chicken Little party because they keep saying, “The sky is falling.” The sky is not falling. We have a healthy economy. Will there be a slowdown? Undoubtedly. There will always be a slowdown after a period of rapid growth. Will there be a recession? Perhaps there will be a small recession, but Ontario, I remind you, is healthy. Growth of 2.5% is not a recession. Everybody is saying there could be growth of 2.5% in Canada next year. I remind those people who are saying that growth of 2.5% in Canada does not equate to growth of 2.5% in Ontario that all the economic experts are saying a 3.5% to 3.7% to 4.5% increase in GDP next year for Ontario. There's nothing wrong with that. That's healthy. It's just not as fast as it has been: 6% growth, 5% growth is absolutely phenomenal, and that is solely as a result of this government's policy. Two and a half per cent growth is healthy, 3% growth is healthy, and that won't cause any problems for this government.

Let's compare the situation now to the late 1980s and early 1990s. We did not have a healthy all-sector economy in the late 1980s. We had a sector that was driven largely by the construction industry. Ontario right now is strong because all sectors are strong. When the NDP came to power in the early 1990s, they exacerbated an already coming recession. They exacerbated it by increasing their deficit to \$11 billion, believing they could spend the province out of the recession. It was not to be, as we know. In fact, we had a made-in-Ontario, made-in-Canada recession that was far more serious than anything this country had seen since the 1930s.

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But we can manage the situation a whole lot better than that party could. We can manage the situation a whole lot better than the Liberals can. You will see at the end of the day that with over 830,000 net new jobs since we came to power in 1995—

Interjection: From Kanata to Kitchener.

Mr Wettlaufer: —from Kanata to Kitchener, and over 40% of all the net new jobs in Canada having been created in Ontario, our economy is strong indeed.

It was very interesting. I picked up today a copy of Inside Queen's Park, which is a weekly publication by G.P. Murray Research Ltd. I noted in here a section, if I may quote, on the SuperBuild report: “... so far the new corporation has invested over \$4.8 billion, with additional investments planned for next year of at least \$2.2 billion. Of the \$4.8 billion committed so far, \$3.6 billion is going to hospitals, colleges and universities. Other targets are small town and rural area improvements (mainly for drinking water quality) and sports, culture and tourism projects.”

It goes on to say, "The report notes that public investment in infrastructure has over the past 20 years 'lagged behind economic growth and demand for services.'" It is only because of the strong economy that was generated by this government's economic policies that we have had the money that can be poured into the SuperBuild fund in order to make up for the lack of investments that were made by the two previous governments.

We have a strong economy. We have confident consumers. We have confident business people. We have jobs. I suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that even the provincial Liberals could learn from the lessons in history of the past five years, but I suppose they probably will not because they continue to battle against our economic direction and our tax reductions. I remind them that even their federal cousins in Ottawa now recognize our economic policies as being the right ones and they are doing likewise. They have an economic policy which is now primarily centred on tax cuts. Even the federal Liberals have learned from the lessons of history. Maybe the provincial Liberals will do likewise, but I doubt it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Crozier: I welcome the opportunity to spend a few minutes speaking on the supply motion this evening. I actually enjoy following the member from Kitchener Centre in debate because he always opens up so many areas you can talk about.

He's bragging about how much money this government has put into health care. I won't dispute that. He's talking about how great the economy is. I won't dispute that either. But in acknowledging what he has said, because I believe he believes what he said, it just moves me to ask a couple of questions. Why is it, if we're spending so much more in health care than we've ever spent in our history, our hospital emergency wards are clogged? He suggests it's because people don't know how to use them. I guess the member from Kitchener Centre will be able to explain to people how they use them. Perhaps we should have some kind of public information that goes out to people on how to use them, as opposed to the partisan advertising we see this government spend millions of dollars on.

They've spent so much more on health care in the past year, more than at any other time in history. Why then are those emergency rooms that are left open on bypass, on critical care bypass? I guess I'll leave that up to the member for Kitchener Centre to explain to us. Why is it, if they've spent more on health care than at any time in history, that I get more calls today with concern about our health care system than I did almost exactly seven years ago when I started in this Legislature? I guess I'll leave that up to the member to answer as well.

I hope to ask enough questions in my 10 minutes so that perhaps the member from Kitchener Centre won't have time to answer them all.

He says we're the leading jurisdiction of the G8. I'll agree with him again. I think there are a number of reasons for it. He will propose that it's tax cuts that have

done it. All right. To some extent that may be the case. But I think the policies of the federal government should get some acknowledgement. I think the fact that the North American economy has been in its longest period of expansion in history should get some credit for it.

He also raised the question that the opposition's talk is doomsdayish. I'm talking about what's out there, I'm talking about what's in the media today and, yes, I'm talking about some concern that I have for the future. The American economy is apparently cooling down more quickly than ours but, trust me, it's going to affect us somewhere along the way. All we want you to do is acknowledge that. All we want you to do is prepare for it.

I mentioned earlier today concerns I have in my constituency—and I know my colleague from Chatham-Kent Essex shares these concerns—in the area of agriculture. High energy prices are going to be devastating to the greenhouse industry in our area. They've used natural gas up to now. We understand that natural gas prices may double in the next few months. Some greenhouse growers are having to consider changing to an alternative fuel. The problem is that although it's cheaper, it's more harmful to the environment.

Today my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke went on at some length about hydro rates and how we were told that with the restructuring of Ontario Hydro and competition, we were going to have lower hydro rates. The most recent increase we've heard is 13%. We have no idea whether that's going to be the end of the increases or not.

While we can relish the boom we're in today, and I can stand here and say how well off I am today, there are many parts of this economy that don't share the benefit that we've shared.

Poverty is still with us, and I think until the time that we've beaten poverty, none of us can rest. The Minister of Community and Social Services will stand up and say he agrees with that and that's his objective, and I laud him for saying that. We just want to see him do something.

Do you know a question I get asked today? We live in the best times ever. I won't dispute that at all. I've been able to share in some of the best times ever. Some of the government members are still concerned that they're not being paid enough in the best times ever, but I think they, like I and others, will be able to get by. We're living in the very best times ever, yet we can't afford to help those in our province who need help.

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I think specifically of special-needs kids in school. I'm constantly called about the need for millions of dollars, just in my riding alone, to take care of the special-needs kids and their educational needs. They are assessed as having a need, and yet they are told there isn't enough funding. I kind of liken that, in our health care system, to being halfway through having an appendectomy. You've already been diagnosed as needing one, and it's an emergency. They get halfway through the appendectomy and

say, "I'm sorry, we're out of money. We know you need the operation, but we're out of money."

Before I came down here this evening, I was on the phone with a father who is working his heart out because of the need of a child of theirs for care at home. They say they are 20th on the list; in other words, they have been told the need is there and that their child qualifies, and yet they are 20th on the list. How do you tell a parent that, when we live in the very best times we've ever lived in?

Along with your rosy outlook and description that it's never been better than it's ever been, there are still these questions that haunt our constituents. I'm surprised you don't get the same questions.

I suspect the economy in Kitchener is not unlike the one in Essex county. I expect the expectations of your constituents are not unlike mine. I guess you have all the happy ones and we have those who are need. If that's the case, then you're not being fair there either. I like to think that politics don't enter into need. I like to think that a benevolent, conscientious, compassionate government treats everybody the same.

We're even told by them from time to time, "We were elected to govern all the people of all the province," and I've give you the benefit of the doubt. You weren't elected by a majority of them, but you were elected to govern all the people of all the province, and I give you the benefit of the doubt. I just ask, when you stand up and say how great things are, that just on occasion you acknowledge there are some things you're not doing that should be done.

I smiled just a little when the member got up and bragged about how much money you've spent. I suspect there are some of those Reform-Alliance, right-wing supporters of yours who just cringe when you stand up and brag about how much money you spend. In the past, we've heard terms like "spending like a drunken sailor." I suspect some of your right-wing supporters, some of those who elected you because you were going to make government smaller and decrease all their taxes—you tell us it's only the middle class—would like big hunks of tax breaks, and yet you stand up and brag that you're outspending everybody in history. Well, that's not your nature. A right-wing party, a Reform-Alliance party like the Mike Harris government, wouldn't normally stand up and brag about how much they're spending.

Anyway, my time is up. I only wish that when the member opposite stood up and bragged about how much money he spent, he could brag about how he had spent on special-needs kids and services at home, and that he had spent so much on a health care system that still results in clogged, closed emergency rooms.

Mr Bisson: Thank you for an opportunity to speak on a money or budget bill, which allows us to talk about all the issues that touch this Legislature, from finance through the various ministries that are funded through this ministry.

I want to speak of a couple of them, but before I start I want to make a comment with regard to one of the

members, Mr Wettlaufer—I forget his riding; I'm sure he'll tell me what it is.

He talked about the history of this place, and he talked about five years. I had to laugh to myself, because history is always referred to as something that expands beyond more than five years. I thought his comments on that were kind of interesting. I'm sure he's going to get up and elaborate on that at one point. I always find his comments both enlightening and wonderful.

We all know that before 1995, the world was a black place. Nothing happened. Everything was awful. It was just so terrible how life operated across this country, not only here in Ontario but across North America and the rest of the world, because Mike Harris hadn't come to power yet. Before 1995 I think all the world was cringing, wondering what was going to happen until the messiah himself walked down University Avenue and came to Queen's Park. We all know that after that, the American economy rebounded, the Ontario economy rebounded, Quebec, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, all the 52 states, Europe. It was just amazing.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the government for its wonderful agenda, because we know that without it Bill Clinton would never have been able to do all the things he did in the United States. I'm sure M. Mitterrand and Mr Blair and others across the ocean in Europe, in countries like Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, France, Italy and Greece, all want to send homage to the government across the way, especially to Mr Wettlaufer, because we all know that before 1995, nothing good happened in the world. It was just an awful place to live.

I feel so much better now that Mr Harris was elected in 1995, because before that I know there was nothing good to be said in the world. There were just the lost centuries and the lost millenniums before. Between the pyramids being built in Giza in about 1500 BC and 1995, nothing happened, and we understand that. I feel so lucky to be in this Legislature with luminaries such as Mr Wettlaufer. It just warms the cockles of my heart.

I wanted to start off by saying that, because we all know the world began in 1995 and nothing existed before. It was just like—I'm just moved.

Enough on that. I think I've made my point.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): Who said that?

Mr Bisson: Good day, Rob. How's it going? Nice to see you here.

Mr Wettlaufer: What point did you make? I don't think anybody understands it.

Mr Bisson: Never mind. I won't even comment.

A couple of things I want to address here. The first one—not in any particular order—is what's happening in Ontario, and specifically what's happening in north-eastern Ontario, when it comes to transportation. About 80 years ago, the government started Ontario Northland. Eventually it became the ONTC. Actually, before that it was called the T&NO railway. The government of the day, in this very Legislature 80-some-odd years ago.

understood that by creating a railway, part of a transportation infrastructure, we would be able to develop much of what is now northern Ontario. We pushed a spur northward from North Bay, eventually to be hooked up to the CN all the way up to Hearst and Moosonee and all the way across to the rest of western Ontario.

The governments of those days, and governments since, understood they had a responsibility when it came to both the economy and the people of that region to provide a sound transportation infrastructure to make sure that not only were people able to move within that area of the province, called northeastern Ontario, but also that the economy is able to operate as well. Every government until this time—well, nobody did anything before 1995, but I'll just pretend that never happened—has understood that it had a responsibility when it came to northern Ontario. There was somewhat of an understanding by all governments before—be it Conservative, Liberal, a Liberal-NDP accord or an NDP government—that there was a responsibility to make sure services were provided to the people of northeastern Ontario by way of the Ontario Northland.

Yes, that meant subsidies were paid by the province of Ontario to the ONTC, because all governments before understood that the geography in northern Ontario is vast, the population is fairly sparse, but nonetheless there needs to be a transportation infrastructure to move goods and people across northeastern Ontario. At one time, we moved a lot of people on that railway, but over the years we're moving fewer people—I believe somewhere around 32,000 people used the Northlander last year. But also, the idea of shipping freight for companies like Kidd Creek mines, Abitibi-Price, Levesque Plywood, you name it: a whole bunch of companies up north utilize the railway as a way to move their goods to market.

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Governments in the past understood they it had to pay a subsidy to the ONTC because the market was not such to recapture the amount of money it actually cost to run that enterprise. In much the same way the Conservative government today understands it needs to maintain a highway infrastructure in southern Ontario to allow our industry to operate, governments in the past understood you had to operate a railway and the other companies it owned in order to allow the northern Ontario economy to prosper.

What's happened recently is that since 1996 the Harris government has undertaken an approach that says, "We are going to slowly kill the ONTC, and then we're going to build the argument that we have to get rid of the Northlander and let's see what else." Immediately after getting elected in 1995, the government moved, in 1996, to close down norOntair, the air arm of the ONTC. Governments in the past—in fact it was Bill Davis's Conservative government that created norOntair—understood there were fairly good links when it came to north-south air service, but when it came to the east-west connections between northern communities, there was very poor service and often aircraft that people did not

feel comfortable riding in, not that they weren't safe, but because of the loads they had to run fairly small aircraft to make it economical. Customers didn't like that, and they didn't use it. Eventually, people in the Conservative government under Bill Davis understood we needed to create an air wing of the ONTC, called norOntair, to create those east-west links across the northern Ontario economy.

In 1996 the government decided they were going to get rid of norOntair. They told us at the time—Harris got up in the House, along with Mr Hodgson, who was the Minister of Northern Development and Mines at the time—"Don't worry, be happy. Everything's going to be wonderful. The moment we close down norOntair, everything is going to be all right. The private sector will go running to the economy of northern Ontario and they'll be falling over each other to provide services to communities like Hearst and Kapuskasing and Englehart and Timmins and Sudbury and all the way across northwestern Ontario to Dryden and a whole bunch of other communities across the way—Terrace Bay and others. Not to worry. Everything will just be fine."

We said at the time, "You can't do that. The reason norOntair was put in place was because the private sector did not service most of those communities, and where they did, the service was substandard and people didn't use it. In order to allow the economy to prosper, we have to have those east-west links to northern Ontario that allow travellers and, more importantly, business people to travel from one end of northern Ontario to the other in order to do business in that part of the province."

The government said, "Don't worry. Everything will be fine. We don't believe that putting public dollars in this crown corporation to run norOntair is good business for the province of Ontario to be in." With its ideological belief that government should not be involved in that type of business, they closed it down. As a result, communities en masse across northern Ontario lost air services. The government's response was, "Giving a subsidy to a public corporation is a bad thing. Instead, we're going to give a subsidy to the municipalities to pay a private air carrier to provide services in their community." So public subsidy, bad; private subsidy, good—a me Tarzan, you Jane kind of attitude, because that's about as smart as Mike Harris can think sometimes, decided that was the way it had to be.

Unfortunately, that has not resolved the problem. Because of a whole bunch of reasons, a number of communities across northern Ontario have no east-west air service whatsoever and don't have any north-south service either, even after that subsidy being offered to communities. Take a look along Highway 11. The communities of Englehart, Kirkland Lake, Cochrane, almost Kapuskasing—they managed to negotiate a deal with Bearskin now that the Air Quebec deal has fallen through—and Hearst have lost air services all together. The business community in those areas has no mechanism to travel for business outside those communities.

The members of the government stand here and say, "What the heck. They're only small communities. It can't be that big a deal. How many people live in Kirkland Lake? 10,000? It can't be all that serious. Englehart—another 4,000 or 5,000 people. Who cares?" Well, if you're the businesses and you're the owners and the operators of those businesses up in those communities, you do care, because it means you're not able to travel quickly to take advantage of what's happening in the market, to do what you've got to do to allow your business to grow and prosper.

I see it. I'm a pilot. I have my own aircraft. That's how I travel in northeastern Ontario. You can't do it otherwise, unless you want to put your snowshoes on and walk through the bush, because most of the communities in my riding are without any kind of service other than air service. I see what happens. Businesses are forced to charter private companies to come and fly travellers in and out of their businesses to be able to do what needs to be done—at a very high cost, I might add.

I look at companies like Columbia Forest up in Hearst, I look at Tembec, I look at Abitibi, I look at a number of other companies, the recycling companies out of Kirkland Lake. The only way they're able to do any kind of air travel is to charter, at an extreme cost, travellers in and out of their businesses. That adds to the overall cost of doing business and it hurts their viability as a corporation and, I would argue, hurts the economy of northeastern Ontario as well.

But the government said, "Don't worry. We will privatize. We will get rid of norOntair. We don't need to be throwing a public subsidy after this thing. Everything is going to be fine after." We find out after the words, maybe about a year down the road, that all of those communities are without service. There's a whole range of communities that have either no service at all or have had air service in east-west connections go, quite frankly, from a fairly reasonable schedule that was affordable to a fairly expensive and not-as-frequent service as we used to have at norOntair.

So you say, "What does that mean?" It means that's one part of our transportation infrastructure that went down the tubes since you guys have taken power. As a result, the northern Ontario economy has suffered. You like to quote numbers? Take a look at the northern Ontario economic numbers. The numbers indicate that northern Ontario has not benefited to the degree of southern Ontario from what has happened in the North American economy. Yes, southern Ontario has prospered. There have been a lot of good business opportunities in southern Ontario as a result of what's happened overall within the economy and they've been able to plug into that. But for northern businesses and northern entrepreneurs it's been fairly difficult, and one of the reasons, I wouldn't argue at all, is the issue of air travel.

Now the government, since 1996, says, "Our next plan now is to get rid of the Northlander," because it's been a thorn in the side of people like Mike Harris for a long

time that any kind of public dollars are going into a company called ONTC, the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, that's based out of North Bay, the Premier's own riding. What they've done is reduce service on the trains from having two trains a day, where you're able to get on the train at one time, at a fairly reasonable time in the morning, travel to Toronto, get off, do your business and go back on the 11 o'clock train to northern Ontario.

The government said, "Oh, we're wise. We're going to save the commission money. We're going to drop it down to one train." So now if you want to take the train out of Timmins, you have to get on a bus to go to Matheson. You get on the train, I believe it is about 5:30 or 6 in the morning, you travel by train into Toronto, and if you want to get back, you're brought back that night all right but you're dropped off in the early morning in the middle of northern Ontario. In the winter that ain't exactly a very inviting thing to do. As a result of reducing the train service, many people stopped taking the train. Surprise, surprise.

Imagine, if you will, if you were to have TTC service here in Toronto on the subway going up Yonge street and all of a sudden the TTC said, "To save money, rather than having a train every two or three minutes during rush hour, we're going to run one every 30 minutes." I want to know how many people would actually stand on the platforms along the Spadina and University lines and along the Yonge Street line, waiting for subway trains if the city of Toronto was to reduce services to such a point that you had to wait 30 minutes to take the subway. People will either walk, take the bus or get in a car, or carpool. It's as simple as that, and that's what this government has done with the Northlander. They reduced services to the point that people stopped using it to the degree that they did.

We now find ourselves in 1999-2000 with a ridership of just under 32,000 people, where we used to run at pretty well double that number when this government came to office. So I will argue and say, on the record, this government has set up the demise of the Northlander because they don't believe that this government should be paying a subsidy. So what they did is change the service. They made it inflexible as far as schedules for people and they made it difficult for people to utilize because of the infrequency. Surprise, surprise, people stopped taking it and now we have fewer people, therefore we have less revenue, and therefore they are more reliant on the subsidy than they were before.

1950

The government's response is not, "We were wrong. We need to take a look at changing train service. Maybe what we have to do is look at some of the new technologies that have been developed by other companies where, rather than having one big, long train, as we have now with the Northlander, you run some of these specialty trains that have their own engines within their own cars. They carry about 100 people. They're less expensive to operate. They run at 120 to 130 kilometres

an hour on a type of rail bed such as we have." Rather than looking at those kinds of options for the investment that would be needed to beef up services so people can use it, this government's response last week, by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines in North Bay, was, "We have a solution. We had some people called KPMG look at this. They know a lot about trains. They know a lot about northern Ontario, supposedly. Their answer is that we should shut it down altogether."

So what they said was, "Let's break the ONTC into a bunch of different parts. The Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, which is made up of the rail service division, the marine division, the bus division, the telephone division—let's break it up into various parts, sell it off, and then basically shut down the Northlander at the end of that process." The section that makes money, which is the long-distance part of the business, called ONTel, which makes about \$10 million to \$12 million profit a year, the government is going to privatize that.

Yes, somebody is going to buy ONTel, no doubt, because there's money to be made. That thing is making a profit. I don't believe for a second that nobody will buy ONTel. But the problem is, when you sell ONTel off, you sell part of what makes money at the ONTC to allow us to keep freight rates on our freight trains low enough so that industrial users are able to keep their transportation costs under control. They're high enough, I might add, as it is. It also helps to cross-subsidize the rail service when it comes to passenger service from Cochrane to Toronto.

But this government says, "Oh no. We're going to sell off the ONTel part, let somebody buy that altogether. We're then going to break off the marine division to another company. Then what we're going to be left with is the freight service and the passenger rail service." What they're suggesting is that they privatize north of Cochrane by way of the Polar Bear Express and the Little Bear, and then privatize the rail freight services to the same or a different company in the private sector and then shut down the Northlander altogether.

I say to the government across the way, what a recipe for disaster. There are a whole bunch of implications here that the government needs to understand. The first part, when you look at rail passenger service, obviously is the inconvenience that you're going to be giving northerners when it comes to the ability to travel. That goes without saying. But let's say, for example, that you're successful in selling off the ONR section from Cochrane to Moosonee and you sell off what is now the Polar Bear Express and the Little Bear Express going up to Moosonee and a private operator takes that. What makes you think they're going to be able to run that thing at a profit without increasing fares to the consumers?

Those people have no other choice. There are no highways going up to Moosonee. It is their highway. I say to you across the way, wake up and smell the coffee. For that community, you don't have any other choice. If you want to ship goods to Moosonee or eventually to get

their way up to Attawapiskat and Fort Albany and various communities, you don't have any other choice. You either throw it on Air Quebec and you pay a huge amount of money to be able to ship somebody or something up there, or you put it on the train. You're saying, "That's OK. We can privatize that. No big deal. We'll sell off all the profitable parts of the corporation and we'll privatize to some private individual or corporation the train service from basically Cochrane up to Moosonee."

I say, the danger is—riders beware, because there's no big rocket scientist needed to figure this thing out—at the end of the day, it's going to be the consumer that's going to have to pay. Those people using the Polar Bear and the Little Bear from Cochrane all the way up to Moosonee are going to have to pay more money to allow a private sector operator to run that at a sufficient amount of revenue to be able to operate it and turn a profit. You don't have to be a big genius to figure that out.

Think about it this way. For the people of Moosonee, that's their only road. They have no other way of getting there other than by plane. I would make this analogy: what would happen in your constituencies in southern Ontario if the government of Ontario was to say, "Oh, we're going to shut down and plow up Highway 400 up to Barrie"?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): No way.

Mr Bisson: The member across the way says that would be great. He says that in jest as a commuter, but the point is there's no way you could afford to do that. Never the mind the inconvenience of people having to travel up the old Highway 11, but imagine what it would do to that booming economy of the area of Barrie and north. That is the second industrial heartland to our part of the province. The development that has been happening across Barrie and the Lake Simcoe area—and not for the past six years, Mr Wettlaufer; it's been going on for a long enough time—is basically because of the infrastructure that's already there. Those companies rely on Highway 400 to be able to move up to Barrie.

Now imagine, if you will, if your government—or any government for that matter—were to come forward and say, "We're selling off Highway 400," or "We're going to plow it under." You know—and I wouldn't blame them—every member who lives north of Barrie would be running down here and saying "You can't do this, it's crazy." Well, I'm telling you, it's crazy. Don't do it to the people of Moosonee, because at the end of the day, if they have to pay higher rates, you're not doing them any favour. The only person you'd be doing a favour is some private entrepreneur who takes it on and may make a buck out of this thing.

I say again, people up in Moosonee don't have the wherewithal as far as high-paying jobs to be able to pay higher ticket prices. The unemployment rates in Moosonee and Moose Factory are high enough as it is, thank you, and the jobs that are there don't pay enough for those people to be able to pay for rail tickets that are going up.

I would have been much more comfortable if this government had come to me and said, "Listen, Gilles, what we'd like to do is talk about a self-government arrangement with the Mushkegowuk people. We believe as a government we don't want to be running a train service that is primarily for the use of the First Nations people of the James Bay." If they were to come to me as a government and said, "We want to enter into some kind of discussion with Mushkegowuk people and their forming their own corporation so they can run their own business, so their own people can benefit with the jobs, and in the end we will provide a subsidy from the province to be able to operate it," I'd say, "OK, I can understand where you're going with that. You're breaking up ONTC, which I don't like, but at the end you are protecting the people of Moosonee, Moose Factory and the James Bay area and you're doing a self-government initiative for the people of James Bay called the Mushkegowuk." I wouldn't have any problem supporting that. I say it publicly.

But for you to come here and suggest that we're going to move by way of privatization—if nobody buys it, what the hell are you going to do with it? Close it down? What are those people going to do? Jump on a plane? Basically that's the only option they've got or to come out with a skidoo in the winter, because there are no roads up there.

So I say to the government across the way, it is a really dangerous thing that you're doing when you're playing with the infrastructure of northern Ontario.

The freight aspect of the business: all along Highway 11 from North Bay all the way up to Cochrane and then the CN line that has been purchased by the ONR from Cochrane all the way up to Hearst, there are many businesses that rely on shipping freight by way of the ONR—from Hearst, Levesque Plywood which is now Columbia Forest Products; Lecours Lumber; Tembec, which is the old United sawmill, all the way down to Kapuskasing to Spruce Falls, which is now Tembec; the old Abitibi plant in Smooth Rock Falls, which is now again Tembec; the Abitibi plant in Iroquois Falls; in Timmins, Kidd Creek Mines; and others; all the way down to Highway 11, down to North Bay—rely on that rail service to move their bulk goods, natural resources, to market and to ship them for the economic benefit that they get from that.

If you privatize this company, there are no guarantees that you're going to be able to hold the race because, again, will the private corporation be able to recoup all its costs by way of owning the freight services of the ONR with the rate structures that now exist? The answer is no. So to people like Kidd Creek Mines, which is owned by Falconbridge, it's an increased shipping cost that they're going to have to incur. They can't afford it. They're already laying people off at that mine. We don't need to have more people in our community laid off because of stupid policies of your government that meet an ideological principle of privatization and the government getting out of the business of who knows what. I say to the government across the way, there are some real

dangers with what you're doing from a practical point of view.

I thought you guys ran under a term of calling yourselves a common sense government with a Common Sense Revolution; there's nothing common or sensible about what you're doing. You're not trying to strengthen the ONTC; you're not trying to restructure it in some way that makes it more efficient. What you're trying to do is just get rid of it.

There is a reason why the ONTC is there. It is there to provide the basic infrastructure of transportation that services some of the people along the Highway 11 corridor when it comes to rail passenger service, when it comes to tourism and when it comes to rail freight services. You take that away, you change it, you privatize it, and rates go up. You're going to hurt that, there's just no question.

2000

What's interesting, however—and this is a bit amusing, actually. Last week the minister goes to North Bay to make the announcement that he did, as I talked about earlier. Then, the Premier is in a scrum and is being asked to defend his own government and their action in trying to break apart ONTC into various factions. The Premier in the scrum, as he always does, says, "Oh well, you know, geez, it's a rather expensive thing to do. We're spending all kinds of money on public subsidies to this corporation. We've got to get rid of it." He says, "In fact, I could give everybody who takes the Northlander train an airline ticket or a limousine ride from their home to wherever they're going in Toronto and that would be cheaper than the subsidy we're giving to the ONTC to run the Northlander."

The entire subsidy to the ONTC last year, in the estimate books of 1999-2000, was just over \$4 million. That was to subsidize rail passenger service and part of the freight services as well. Do you know how much it would cost to give everybody an airline ticket who took the Northlander last year? It's over \$30 million.

So I say to the Premier, thank you, give us the cheque. We'll take the \$30 million. We're going to put it into the ONTC and we're going to build a better ONTC, if that's what you want to do. If you're willing to throw \$30 million out for people to take airline tickets from their home communities because you say it's cheaper than putting them on the train and providing rail transportation out of those communities, it's a cost of over \$30 million. I'm prepared to say let's do it, Mike. Give us the \$30 million. We'll be happy.

In fact, put airplanes in each of those communities so people can take them. Maybe that would be a debate to have. But the point that's funny about this is that the Premier goes out and he makes these flippant comments, basically making policy on the fly, because he was trying to defend himself inside that press conference. "Mr Premier, how can you be doing this?" He had to defend himself, so his answer was again a flippant comment. "Oh well, don't worry. Jeez, it's a whole bunch of money, you know. Everybody can take a limo or take a

plane to Toronto from their home community. It would be cheaper than the subsidy we give to the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission."

The sad part is, the media all wrote it up as if it was gospel, because, after all, it did come from Mike and nothing existed in the world before 1995. We know that's when the universe really unfolded, June 8, 1995.

I went back and did a little math just very quickly, and if you took basic tickets that Air Ontario charges from Timmins down, it would work out to over \$30 million. It's actually more than that, but I was fairly conservative on my numbers.

The interesting part is, the Premier, at the end of the week, goes back to his riding, as we all do on the weekends, to do the work of his constituency. He goes to North Bay and it was a flurry of bad press for the government last week in northern Ontario. Even the Timmins Daily Press, which is not known to be an anti-Conservative paper—they've always been fair to me but they're not known as being anti-Conservative. Most people would say they're pretty pro-Conservative. Even they, in their editorials—I couldn't believe it when I read the paper, I believe it was on Friday, them chastising the Conservative government over the decision to shut down the ONTC in the way that it was prescribed. Even the Timmins Daily Press was chastising the Conservative government. I said, "I've seen everything." I never thought I'd see that in an editorial of the Timmins Daily Press, but there it was in black and white.

So the Premier, as most politicians do, comes back to his riding on the weekend and then the media goes to him and says, "Mr Premier, why is it that you're closing down the ONTC? Do you realize this means 1,000 less jobs in your community? Mr Premier, do you realize what that means for the northern Ontario economy?" They started asking all the questions, some of the things that I'm raising here tonight. And the Premier, as he does, policy on the fly—because Mike doesn't like to look bad when he's in front of the media as far as bad policy—says, "Oh no, no. We're not shutting anything down."

I couldn't believe my ears. All of a sudden we went from, Tuesday or Wednesday—it was Thursday when they made the announcement that, "We are basically carving up the corporation. We are privatizing part of it; we're shutting down the other part," to Friday, the Premier is saying subsidies are a bad thing and we shouldn't be paying subsidies, in fact it would be cheaper to give airline tickets to everybody who uses the Northlander to go to Toronto, to when he goes to his riding on Saturday and then he says, "Oh, no, we're not shutting anything down. Oh, no, you didn't understand what we were doing. In fact, we're not getting rid of the freight service."

I guess all of a sudden he must have got some phone calls at his office, probably from people from Tembec and Abitibi and others who said, "Hey, Mike, hello. Wake up. Do you realize what you're doing to northern

Ontario? Do you see what you're doing to our corporation?" He finally woke up a little bit.

The Premier stood there and made policy on the fly again. I like this policy better than the last two policies he made just two days before, and the third day before that. All of a sudden, the Premier decided he wanted to look good to his local media and he didn't want to get beat up too badly while he was in his home community in North Bay, so he said, "Don't worry, we're not going to sell the freight services. That's sacrosanct. We're not going to do anything with that." That's sort of what he said. There's still a little bit of wiggle room there, but that's basically what he was saying.

Then he said, "And at the end, don't worry if we sell off the Polar Bear Express and the Little Bear. We're going to make sure that the new private corporation ends up with a subsidy." I thought, two days before, he was against subsidies. I guess he was against subsidies going to the public sector and in favour of subsidies going to the private sector. I don't know. It's kind of schizophrenic, if you ask me. The positions this Premier takes are kind of weird.

Then he said at the end—and this is the one I couldn't believe; if it's true, I congratulate the Premier—"We're not shutting the Northlander down; we're going to make it better."

What a way to run a province, what a way to run a government and what a way to give direction to the ONTC. You start from, "We're shutting it down," to "No, we're going to give everybody dollars to be able to take airplanes out of their home communities," to "No, we're not doing it," in a period of three days.

People in northern Ontario are somewhat confused. The Conservatives in our community—because there are some—are standing up and saying, "See, we told you so. We told you Mike Harris is good for northern Ontario. He didn't really mean what he said two days before to the people who are most affected by the closure of the trains, namely the passengers." They're saying, "Hang on a second. Do we really need to organize here? Do we need to do anything? Is he or isn't he? I don't know these days." You should have heard some of the phone calls I had on the weekend from those people.

I say to the government across the way, you need to make those kinds of investments within organizations like the ONTC; otherwise, without them, our economy in northern Ontario is very hard to operate in a way that people are able to benefit. To the government across the way, I wish you would take a little bit more care when it comes to the development of policies and how they affect northern Ontario, and, I would argue, the rest of this province. I would hope that with the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, you would do something positive.

I want to give you some examples of suggestions I've heard from people in northern Ontario about what we could be doing with the Northlander, because I think it's incumbent upon me to make sure we have that part of the debate as well.

One of the things that was raised with me a number of times on a tour I did with Acting Speaker Tony Martin last spring—what we called the trans-frustration tour—is the whole issue of schedules when it comes to the Northlander. If people are going to take the train, you have to make it convenient, period—it's a very simple thing—you have to make it affordable and it has to be a pleasurable experience. Well, it's none of the above when trains are run the way they are, not because of the staff but because of the management decisions that have been made that force passengers to get on the train at ungodly hours. There is basically one train per day; one going up, one coming back late at night. Also, the facilities on the trains themselves could be made better. One of the suggestions that was made was that you increase the frequency of the trains so that you return to a couple of trains a day at the very minimum, and also upgrade the services on the train.

One of the other things we were told is that we should be looking at doing something with seat sales. People have told me on a number of occasions that the train has been full and the ONTC or ONR have gone out to the public and offered seat sales for travellers wishing to travel on the Northlander. Rather than having 100 or 60 people on the train, whatever the number may be on a particular day, the train has been full when they've done seat sales. I will argue that if you have 300 customers at \$150 round trip or you have 60 customers at \$220 round trip, you don't have to be too bright to figure out which one the ONTC is going to make more money with. So we say you have to make your fares more competitive than for people to take their own car or get on a bus, because it's a different mode of travel. Also, people are cost-conscious when it comes to the idea of being able to decide how they're going to travel.

2010

The other issue is that we should be looking at different kinds of trains along the ONR line. One of the suggestions—and I don't remember the name of the train, but one of the partners of Bombardier makes a self-contained train. It's basically two cars with their own engines within the assembly itself. If I remember correctly, it is able to hold about 100 passengers and it runs at approximately 130 kilometres an hour along lines such as what the ONR has. People said it wouldn't be a bad idea if we were to try to get one or two of these trains and use them for interconnections within northern Ontario. So if I'm in Hearst and I want to go to Timmins, I can do that, because the rail still leaves Hearst, the old CN line connects into the ONR line and the ONR line still gets up to Porcupine.

You could put that kind of service in place so people will say, "I can get on the train early in the morning—120 clicks an hour from Timmins, with a stop-off in Iroquois Falls, Cochrane, Smooth Rock and Kap along the way," and you can get yourself into Hearst about three hours later. That would be a service that people would be prepared to use. You can have something like that where you run one in the morning and another one

back later on at night or whatever schedule works. You can also look at putting that kind of service on the main line, from Cochrane down to North Bay, as a way of increasing ridership overall for the train and then tie that schedule into the Northlander itself—that's one of the things we were told—so that maybe the Northlander actually doesn't run the way it does now. Maybe it would be a service that runs from somewhere—North Bay or a little bit north—with a connector service of some type going on it. That was one of the suggestions made by a number of people who presented to us.

The other idea that was presented was utilizing the Northlander as a tourist destination train. This I think has a lot of potential and is something that could really assist the northern Ontario economy. Almost every community we went to—it didn't matter where we went along the line—people said, "There are a whole bunch of things we can attract people into our community for when it comes to experiencing what northern Ontario is all about, everything from cross-country skiing, to fishing in summer, snowmobiling, downhill, ecotourism. You name it; it's all there. Everything you ever want to do outdoors can be done in northern Ontario and it is probably one of the best places in North America to come to."

People suggested that we should, by way of the ONTC, get some seed dollars from the provincial government in order to hire some people within the private sector to take stock of tourist opportunities along Highway 11 and the ONR corridor, from North Bay all the way up to Moosonee, look at what is available and then put it together in various types of packages that then could be marketed by tourist agents across North American and even in Europe as packages to northern Ontario: "Come and see the north," or whatever the slogan would be.

The idea is that if I'm sitting in Toronto or in New Jersey and I want to bring my family on an ecotourism adventure in summer, there is a package I would buy that would include train transportation, accommodation in the community I might go to, passes I'd need to go into the various facilities I might be visiting, utilizing local people as guides etc, pulling all that together so we're able to attract into northern Ontario people who are willing to spend their hard-earned dollars to enjoy what we have to offer by way of tourism.

Many other countries do this. Many other jurisdictions have done it and have been quite successful. There's no reason why, with proper investment and co-operation with communities along that line, we couldn't be looking at doing something like that to not only increase ridership for the ONR train but also to bring much-needed dollars into northern Ontario that we need to be able to operate our economies.

They also suggested, by way of that particular train, that you can put a casino on it. That's something that was actually raised by my friend Mr Ramsay from the Timiskaming-Cochrane riding. He suggested, as others have done, that you could put a casino on that particular tourist train so that, let's say you and your wife want to

travel to Moose Factory-Moosonee in order to see the sights up there, there's one-day train service from Toronto all the way up that includes a casino on it, whatever facilities you would have to put on it. I think that's something we need to have a bit of debate about, but I'm prepared to hear what they have to say, because we know that people like dropping money in casinos. Don't ask me why. I've done it myself; oh yes, I agree. I've been into Rama and all those places. In fact, I can tell you a story: out of the 20 times I went in, 19 times I went out a loser. The only time I ever won it was \$5. That's my record. I stand by it.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): No wonder you oppose a salary increase so adamantly.

Mr Bisson: That's right. That's why I do.

I say to the government, those are some of the ideas we're hearing.

I'll give the government credit for one part of their announcement which was actually not a bad one: the tourism study that's going to be done in the James Bay area when it comes to Moosonee-Moose Factory. That is actually a recommendation that was made by myself, and others from the Mushkegowuk, who made that recommendation to the government. I give them full credit for going forward with that, because what we are going to attempt to do is take a look at what to do once the Polar Bear actually arrives in Moosonee. What kind of coordination of services can we offer tourists when they get into the community? Far too often what we find has happened is that people ride the Polar Bear, they get up to Moosonee-Moose Factory, and there's a lot to see and do but it's not very well coordinated. We need to put a better effort into coordinating that.

I just want to put on the record on that particular issue what is integral in that. It has to be run by the First Nations people. I say that publicly because there is a feeling within the Mushkegowuk that tourists come in and they don't want anything to do with them. What we need to do is to find ways to encourage interaction of the tourists with the Mushkegowuk people in order to make sure there is an understanding that there are some economic opportunities for them and an opportunity, quite frankly, to highlight their culture and their history and their traditions for people who come to visit James Bay.

One of the things I've been very fortunate to gain since becoming the member for Timmins-James Bay—before that, for 10 years I was the member for Cochrane South, which didn't include James Bay—is the interaction I've had with the Mushkegowuk people. I have learned much in the short time I've been the member for that particular part of the riding. The biggest things I've been impressed with are the strength and wisdom and beauty of the people, what they have as a people, what they share among themselves and what they can share with me. I think one of the problems we have with the tourism section of James Bay is that so far it's been tourism not to the benefit of the Mushkegowuk, by

and large. I think we need to work on making that a little bit better.

There are a number of things we could be doing to increase the viability of the ONR and the ONTC. I would suggest that the government move in that particular direction. It is something that would be good.

The other thing I want to raise is this whole idea of what's been happening in the economy of late. We heard this weekend and we've been reading in the papers for the last couple of weeks, or the last month or so now, that there are a number of indicators that the economy is actually starting to slow down to a certain degree. I hope that's not the case, as you do. I certainly hope we don't go through what we went through from 1989 to 1993. That recession hurt people. It was devastating to families, and I really hope we don't end up going there again. But there is an indication in the economy that basically things are starting to slow down somewhat.

We've seen new car sales drop from 18 million units last year to somewhere below 16 million units. That's two million units less than the year before. We're also seeing indicators, when it comes to the natural resource sector, namely forestry, that the orders for forestry products are not as strong as we've seen in probably the past 10 years, because things really started picking up about 1993-94. That is very scary, Speaker, because you know, as a member of this assembly for as long as I've been here—I believe you were elected the same year I was—just how devastating a downturn in the economy can be.

I would argue that we need to be thinking now, before it's too late, to make the kinds of decisions we've got to make in order to try not to let the economy slip. Certainly Ontario is not going to be able to stop an overall slide of the North American economy. That we know. We've lived that a number of times. But there are some things we can be doing to situate the Ontario economy to try to isolate it to a certain extent from the rest of what might be happening.

We've been very fortunate that the Ontario economy has been connected to the United States by way of trade. We're able to benefit every time they are doing well in their particular economy. What has happened is that as car sales have been strong, the Ontario economy has done well. One of the things I have always felt and that I've always argued for is that we as a province, not in bad times but in good times, should be looking at ways to diversify the Ontario economy. I think there are some real opportunities to do that in various numbers of sectors. There are things that we could be doing. For example, I would argue, as a New Democrat, if we're looking at tax breaks by way of tax cuts, we should be looking at using those a bit more surgically rather than giving people a tax cut overall.

2020

Mr Speaker, you and I received a tax cut. You see the difference on your paycheque, as I do. We make over \$80,000 a year and there is probably a difference of around \$300 a month on our particular paycheques. As

that person who gets the benefit of the \$300, I'm not so sure it does a heck of a lot of good for the Ontario economy. All I did is up the amount of money I put into my savings—it's not money that I'm actually spending—and that's what most of us with money end up doing. We end up buying more property or we end up investing it in the market or putting it in bonds in order to save for that day we wish to retire.

There is some slight benefit to reducing taxes overall. I won't argue there is none. But we would be better off saying, "Let's take a look at how we can deal with taxes in a more progressive way when it comes to the economy." One of the ways we could be doing that is by saying, "Let's have an accelerated write-off on new investment." If, for example, a company comes to Ontario to invest \$10 million or \$100 million on a new project of some type, where they're building, we should look at being able to increase their tax benefits by way of that investment in our communities. For example, we're building a new call centre in the city of Timmins. If you're able to give those who are investing dollars—and making sure you've got some assurances coming back—some sort of tax benefit, there may be some arguments why they may come and invest within our communities. That's one of the ways we can look at that.

The other way is to do it on R&D. Ontario is one of the best places in Canada, if not North America, to do business. We have a lot of very well trained individuals in this province because of our public community college and university system. As a result, we have a lot of good talent in our communities who are perfectly capable and willing to do R&D work and develop the new products and new technologies that feed our industry. I would like to see the province of Ontario—I would even argue, in co-operation with the federal government—doing some investing by way of giving tax credits to those who actually invest in research and development.

That would be a smart way of using our tax dollars, so that we're able to stimulate those activities in the economy. We can go even one step further and say, "We will do that only in certain industries." Maybe we don't do it across the board for anybody who wants to invest, for example, somebody who says, "I just want to invest in a call centre," or whatever. The Ontario government could say, "We want to enhance activities in the economy when it comes to certain sectors, and we will try it on those particular sectors to see how it goes."

If you have somebody out there who is doing R&D work, research and development, and they have an opportunity of doing it in Ontario and recapturing by way of tax credits some of the money they have to spend, it might be a reason for them to invest here. Once they've done the research and development, there are good chances that the spinoff from that research and development will pay dividends down the road. So what is basically a tax credit today is money that we're using by way of tax cuts directly today, but as they do the development, maybe five or 10 years down the road they develop some new product to which Ontario can be a net

benefactor. If you take a look at what some of the economies of Europe and what Japan did after the Second World War, it's exactly that. They basically looked at doing R&D work.

I would also argue that one of the things we need to do is give the caisses populaires and the credit unions a little bit more leeway when it comes to lending money to individuals who want to take the risk of starting their own business. One of the things I think we've all seen—I'm sure the member from Kingston and Madam Boyer from Vanier have this seen in their offices—somebody comes in who has a good idea, and they're willing to take the risk with their own money, but when they go to the bank they're not able to get fully capitalized. As a result, they're not able to go forward with their business. Unfortunately, sometimes they do it anyway, and because they are undercapitalized they're always running from behind the eight ball. What should be properly a \$150,000 or \$200,000 investment they try to do with 75% or 50% of that. They actually get their doors open, but because they are so cash-strapped, they're never able to really operate the way they need to and, in effect, they end up failing.

Part of the problem is that I believe the banks have become much too restrictive, too conservative in their lending. They're not as free as they used to be. As a result, the people with money are the ones who are able to get the most of it. If I'm a big corporation, it's much easier for me to be loaned millions of dollars than it is for the individual looking at the \$100,000 to \$2-million range.

One of the things we could be looking at is how this Legislature can create a program that gives the caisses populaires and the credit unions some ability to make those loans without exposing them to the degree of risk that could be there. It might be by way of the province guaranteeing to a certain extent the risk they would have to take. I think that would be money well spent. In fact the northern Ontario heritage fund used to operate that way at one time. It was fairly successful in being able to stimulate business opportunities in northern Ontario. I would argue that's one of the things we could be doing.

We could also be going in an opposite direction to the one this government is going in when it comes to workers' rights. This government says that what's good for business is to create the climate to allow them to do business. So they say, "We're going to make changes to the Employment Standards Act to allow employers to go to their employees and make side deals about what minimum hours of work there will be, when overtime will be paid, how much the wage will be, all kinds of scenarios." The government says, "We need that flexibility to stimulate the economy and allow that investment to come into the province."

It's fairly simple: I'm looking for a job. I go to the employer and the prospective employer says to me, "Gilles, I have a job for you and it pays \$7 an hour. You're going to be working 60 hours a week," and whatever other conditions the employer wants to put on

"The only way I'm going to give you the job is by your signing under employment standards a waiver taking away your rights from the bare minimums that are available in the Employment Standards Act." What do you think the employee is going to do? Of course the employee is going to accept the deal. The employee is looking for work and they're going to do what they've got to do to be able to work, because that's what most people want to do.

I would argue that what we need to do is to come at it the opposite way around. I think this government is wrong-minded in what it's doing. What we should be doing is trying to find ways to do a couple of things. We should be looking at increasing the minimum the wage. I argue that an increase in the minimum wage will do more to stimulate the economy than giving me, who makes \$80,000 a year, a tax cut. I'll take that money and invest it. That's all I'm going to do with it, because I'm at a point in my life when I don't need to spend the amount of money I did when my kids were younger.

But if you go to a hard-working couple who are younger, or even a single individual, who are trying to purchase their first home, their first car, their first snow machine, their stereo or whatever it is they're trying to buy, if you increase the minimum wage, they're going to spend that money directly in the community. I would argue an increase in the minimum wage would be a good economic policy for Ontario. The Americans have raised the minimum wage a number of times since Clinton has been in power and we've seen a net benefit to that economy. I see no reason why it wouldn't do the same in Ontario.

We could take a look at, for example, what we could do by way of pensions for individuals in Ontario. There are many people in this province, as we well know, who are going to work 30, 35 or 40 years and end up without a pension. All the members of this provincial assembly are without pensions, other than RRSPs and even that is minimal. What is it? Four thousand dollars a year, I think, is what they give us for our pension. It's not enough to retire on, even if you stayed here 30 years. What we need to do is to take a look at building a portable pension system that allows an individual to carry and build pension credits, no matter where they work.

The idea would not be to do away with the pension systems that already exist. For example, if I work at Abitibi-Price in Iroquois Falls, there's a fairly good pension plan. It would not be to get rid of those, but to say there's a minimum pension that people need to pay into. If that minimum is not met, then you automatically pay along with the employer into that pension plan, and no matter where you go, you carry it with you. After 30 or 35 years of work within the economy, you can start making some decisions about your retirement. The net effect of that is to give individuals security to be able to retire, but at the same time it allows them the choice, at a fairly young age, of getting out of the workforce or at least slowing down and getting out of some of the higher-pressure jobs or some of the harder jobs as far as physical

labour is concerned, and allow younger people to move into those.

It allows the natural recycling of people in the economy that now doesn't happen because often many people who are 50, 55 or 60 years old, who would like to slow down and not work to the degree they did when they were 20 don't have that option because the pensions they have are inadequate to allow them to retire. In most cases, people can't afford to retire until age 65 and their CPP kicks in.

I would argue we should look at building a portable pension system, the type that allows people with 30 or 35 years of work to retire with about 60% of their income and base it on that. Anywhere somebody has a pension that meets that, they get exempted from having to pay into this public program, but if they go to work for an employer who doesn't have the minimum pension you're offering by way of this initiative, they pay into that one so that in the end they're fully vested and they've got a 30- or 35-years-and-out clause at about 60 years of age.

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I would also argue that we should look at the issue of a comprehensive disability program. Presently in this province we have a number of disability programs that compete to deal with various disabled workers or individuals. We have workers' compensation for those who are hurt on the job. We have Ontarians with disabilities for those Ontarians who unfortunately enough are disabled, either by way of accident or physical situation. We have short-term disability plans. We have long-term disability plans. We have EI programs. There are a multitude of programs we pay into to deal with the event that we become injured or sick and can't work.

Why don't we get rid of some of the duplication? Why don't we look at developing a comprehensive disability program that says only one thing: you're unable to work because you're either sick or you're injured, and let's deal with that. If the medical comes back that you're unable to work completely for a short period of time, you would go off on what would be 90% of your pre-disability income. If you're off for longer than a year and you're not going to return to your old job, then let's deal with retraining you and getting you back to another job. If you're completely disabled, let's deal with that at a premium that makes sense for both the person who's getting the benefit and for those of us who are paying.

There's all kinds of duplication between programs that I think we can take a look at and try to pull together between the federal and provincial governments. My view would be that you should have one comprehensive disability program and one guaranteed annual minimum wage, so that you don't have welfare and unemployment insurance trying to compete for the same unemployed person. Maybe the federal government can take the responsibility for unemployment, or the province, and then, conversely, the province or the federal government can take the issue of disability and sickness, and each level of government would be responsible for its own program, or maybe one level of government takes it all

and the other one gets out. All I know is that, as Mike Harris likes to put it, there's one taxpayer and we don't need one taxpayer having to fund various governments to do the same thing. I would argue there's a way to do that.

Last but not least, there is the whole issue of democracy. I believe we need to reform the system of antiquated parliamentary politics that we have here today. It is apparent by this debate that our system doesn't work. We have less than a handful of members in this House, most of whom are not paying a heck of a lot of attention. I notice a few Conservatives and a few Liberals who are listening. But by and large, it doesn't have an effect on the government because the government, even though they only got 42% of the vote, has a clear majority in this House. I would argue—

Interjection: That's why we have these midnight sittings.

Mr Bisson: I agree. That's another debate, but with 31 seconds left I'll leave that till later.

We need to reform our system of Parliament so that it more closely resembles what people voted for in an actual election. If 42% of the people of Ontario voted Conservative, we should have no more than 42% of the members in this House represented on the Conservative bench.

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): You didn't say that before 1990.

Mr Bisson: I have felt like that since before 1990, believe me. All the more reason why I feel the way I do.

Mr Speaker, I'm out of time and I thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Further debate? The member for Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Kitchener Centre, Timmins-James Bay and Essex for their comments on the second reading of Bill 162, the Supply Act, which of course is the act that formally approves all money that is spent by the government of Ontario until the end of this year.

I always talk about my riding, but I'd like to talk about some of the comments that were made a little earlier. Particularly, the member for Timmins-James Bay talked a lot about transportation. The member from Kitchener Centre has a cottage just north of my area. It's really nice to see that not only our government but previous governments have expanded Highway 400. It's now up in the MacTier area. What it has done, first of all, is move traffic at a very fast rate, as cottagers and transportation—trucking routes—go north. But the biggest thing it has done is make the highway safer.

Living in that area, where there is a lot of rock—the Canadian Shield—on the side of the highway, we've had some terrible accidents over the last 20 or 25 years. When we talk about transportation and government spending, I know we're now spending about \$1 billion a year under Minister Turnbull, and it's so nice to see that planning continues to go into these highways. I hope that at one point we can see two four-lane highways right

through to northern Ontario. I know we eventually want to get to Sudbury, and also to North Bay with Highway 11.

I'd like to take a few moments to talk about some of the very important investments our government has made in the area of health care in my riding of Simcoe North and of course in our province in general. I know that this year, 2000-01, which this bill takes into account, we will be spending \$22.3 billion on health care in our province. We've been very fortunate in our riding this year to see a significant amount of money spent in different areas of health care. I was doing a quick calculation one day, trying to find out the exact amount of money that was spent on health care in the county of Simcoe. It's hard to get that total. When you look at the money the district health councils spend and what the doctors bill OHIP, it's very difficult to find that money. I estimate that our government is spending about \$750 million on health and long-term care in Simcoe county which, as mentioned earlier by the member for Timmins-James Bay, is one of the fastest-growing regions in our province, very similar to what we see in Kitchener and around the GTA.

When we talk about health care in Simcoe North, certainly the largest provider of health care in my riding is the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital. For over 95 years this hospital has been serving the people of Simcoe North, particularly the Orillia and district area, but it also serves a huge portion of Victoria county as well as the southern portion of the district of Muskoka. At that hospital we have the regional renal dialysis centre. We have satellite hospitals in Alliston and now in Penetanguishene, Huntsville, Barrie and Collingwood.

Hospitals around the province are evaluated yearly in four general areas. The Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital is the only hospital in Ontario rated above average for the amount of staff time devoted to patients for two years in a row. As well, the hospital is a recipient of the National Quality Institute Canada Award for Excellence in quality health care for strong and ongoing commitment to continuously improving the patients' experience and responding to the changing needs of the community.

I was very happy, when I first was elected in June 1999, to have an opportunity to meet with the chairman of the board of directors and the hospital chief executive officer. We formed a very good relationship in that time period. We met on a weekly basis for a number of months, dealing with all the issues hospitals face, and particularly this hospital, because they've been looking at a redevelopment project at Soldiers' Memorial Hospital for close to 20 years. I know that back in the early 1980s when I was on county council, this hospital had come to the county looking for funding. I was really pleased that although they hadn't received the plans to go ahead, they came to me immediately after I was elected and we immediately started to work on plans to go ahead with that.

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The importance of this hospital to our community cannot be overstated. On June 7 this year I had the pleasure of announcing our government's commitment to invest \$14 million in capital funding for the redevelopment project at Soldiers' Memorial Hospital. In October, just a couple of months ago, our government committed another \$4.2 million, which brings the province's investment to just under \$18 million for this planned redevelopment. As we speak, the hospital has secured funding from the city of Orillia. We have also worked very strongly with the county of Simcoe so that the county will pay its portion of the hospital.

This hospital, by the way, is the second-largest hospital in the county of Simcoe. In size and the amount of funding, it falls behind the new Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie, a hospital we're all very proud of. I heard the member for Kitchener Centre talk earlier about cancer care for the Kitchener area. I know Mr Tascona, the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, is doing a lot of work trying to secure funding, and eventually we hope to have a Cancer Care Ontario unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie. Again, we're trying to look after the interests and health care of a very rapidly growing area of Simcoe county.

I want to pay a special tribute to a number of people on the board of directors and to the staff members at Soldiers' Memorial Hospital. I didn't mention it earlier, but the operating budget at that hospital is about \$46 million. When we were allowed to make the announcement, I remember Karen Wilford, the hospital's chairman of the board, saying, "The provincial government's support for our expansion is reassuring. With a total commitment of almost \$18 million, we are closer to our goal of expanding Soldiers' Memorial Hospital to meet the future needs of our patients." With this investment, the hospital will build a state-of-the-art wing to house a new emergency ward, pharmacy, lab, operating rooms and a diagnostic imaging centre.

At this time, I'd also like to make a few comments about the city of Orillia and the council there. The city has been very supportive of this project. In fact, the plans are to close one street so the expansion can go ahead, because they will need that space for the entry to the new emergency ward.

A lot of interesting things have happened in health care this year, and there have been a lot of special announcements on funding. Last month, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided Soldiers' Memorial, again, with almost \$494,000 of funding for acute care, rehabilitation and complex continuing care services. On top of that, a few weeks later they provided another \$400,000 in increased operating funding. We're not 100% sure that \$400,000 is the appropriate number at this time. I'm working with the hospital administrators to see whether we can't have that upped somewhat, because we feel we're a little short on that amount.

As well, I was really pleased at the beginning of this month that as part of the special care announcements, this

hospital received \$117,000 from our government for the expansion of the level-2 neonatal department. It was really exciting to be part of that announcement. It's not a lot of money when you look at it, but \$117,000 is going to buy some specialized equipment in the neonatal unit.

When we were in the hospital making the announcement, it was really exciting, because a young lady was there with her new baby. I think the baby was two months old and weighed about four pounds. But the baby was born at one and a half pounds and spent the first 80 days of its life at the level-3 care neonatal department at Mount Sinai. It was really exciting to see how the baby had improved, and that was at the level 2 neonatal department at Soldier's. The care this little baby received was exceptional, and this \$117,000 will go a long way toward the care other babies will need in the future of that hospital.

Simcoe North is also home to two other equally important hospitals, smaller hospitals but nonetheless very busy. The Penetanguishene General Hospital and the Huronia District Hospital in Midland saw inefficiencies a number of years ago, even before restructuring, and decided to form an alliance to eliminate those inefficiencies. They had an opportunity to reinvest those dollars and they saved that money and put it back into the health care system of our area.

One of the important elements in health care reform is health care providers working together to improve a system. That is what these two hospitals have done, and I commend them on their efforts. They each have separate boards, but they meet on a regular basis and are always looking for ways of finding inefficiencies in the system and continually work to improve on them.

The Huronia District Hospital in Midland—and we're talking about spending money in health care—received another \$1.1 million in early October as well to help with their operating funding.

Within my communities there are a number of dedicated health care professionals and many people who work hard to bring important services to Simcoe North. At this time I'd like to recognize the outstanding contribution of Mrs Exilda Robitaille of Penetanguishene, who last Friday at the Midland town party received a commendation from the town for her work in bringing a permanent dialysis unit to the Penetanguishene General Hospital.

Like other dialysis patients in this area, Mrs Robitaille's husband, Raymond, had to make the often treacherous drive to Orillia in winter three times a week so that he could receive treatment at the Soldiers' Memorial renal dialysis centre. At that time they wished there was a closer alternative. There was a total of approximately 20 people driving to Orillia from the Midland-Penetanguishene-Christian Island area, and with the winter conditions it was felt there was a need to have a dialysis centre in Penetang.

After Mr Robitaille passed away in 1998, Mrs Robitaille went on a campaign and worked with all the different foundations to raise a substantial amount of

money. First of all last fall, a year ago now, we got a temporary-dialysis announcement for the Midland-Penetanguishene area. Since that time Mrs Robitaille has worked with the foundation. There's one young lady, Leslie Monague, who crossed the sound between Christian Island and Penetanguishene and she raised \$16,000 herself. Mrs Robitaille is always having dances, she works with all the businesses in the community and has been able to, I think to date, raise about \$350,000 toward the permanent dialysis unit. After Mrs Elizabeth Witmer visited the town of Midland last summer she had an opportunity to visit the Penetanguishene General Hospital, and about five weeks ago the announcement was made that Penetanguishene General Hospital will have the permanent unit.

I had the honour of taking part in the opening of the temporary dialysis unit in Penetanguishene last winter and it was an exciting thing to see, people being able to use this two-chair facility. By next spring we will have an eight-chair facility in Penetanguishene.

Our government is a national leader in hospital restructuring and modernization to meet the needs of a growing and aging population. Since 1995, more than \$1.7 billion in capital funding has been provided for hospital construction and renovation projects. As we have said time and time again, health care is more than just hospitals. It is also about providing other types of health care to the people of this province.

Community care access centres play an important role in delivering health care services to the people of our communities. These centres have provided home nursing, physiotherapy, speech-language pathology, assisting with personal care in a wide range of services. In September of this year we had an additional \$3.1 million invested into the Simcoe County Community Care Access Centre to hire more nursing, homemaking and therapy service staff. As well, \$1 million was announced for other long-term-care health providers throughout Simcoe county.

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Reforming the province's health care system is a hard but necessary exercise. Our government consulted with health care providers, experts in the field and, most important, the people of this province. One of the key recommendations of the Health Services Restructuring Commission was the urge to create more long-term-care beds throughout Ontario, and our government is honouring that commitment. At the new Villages of Leacock Point Health Care Centre in Orillia we're building 112 new long-term-care beds. I'd like to thank the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. As I said earlier, she visited Midland and opened up the Hillcrest Village centre which was another 100 beds.

Behind all these long-term-care facilities there always seem to be very strong-willed people and hard-working entrepreneurs. I know with the Villages of Leacock Point, I'd like to pay special attention to the Jarlette family, David and Alex Jarlette, a father and son team, who have built a number of facilities across Ontario and they are currently building this new 112-bed unit in

Orillia, with plans to expand to other areas of the region as well. That facility will open this coming March.

The other facility that has just opened, the Hillcrest Village centre—I'd like to pay special attention to the Walter Enns and Jonathon Enns families. They've done a phenomenal job. The old St Andrews Centennial Manor, which was the original hospital in Midland, went through a number of changes over the last 100 years, and now they've got this beautiful new facility attached to the side of it. The plans are now to take the old facility and make it into more of a short-term-care facility.

Since the Harris government was elected, 533 new long-term-care beds have been allocated to Simcoe county. The provincial government has also committed to update 303 long-term-care beds in Simcoe county alone. Provincially, this government has committed to creating over 20,000 new health care beds, which will improve access to community-based services for an additional 100,000 Ontarians.

I'd like to leave a few minutes today for the member for Durham—he'd like to make a few comments—but there are a couple of other announcements that we had made in the way of health care. A couple of weeks back the minister made an announcement on an additional \$306,000 to reduce tobacco use in the county of Simcoe. That money, of course, would go to the Simcoe County District Health Unit. Over \$226,000 in funding will be provided for Simcoe county's Quit Smoking 2001 contest in support of smoke-free public places and workplaces. As well, there will be another \$80,000 in provincial funding through the Simcoe county Action on Tobacco program announced.

To me, it's always important that we spend money in our health unit systems because of the fact that we have to promote and protect our citizens, but I believe this money is well spent to reduce the use of tobacco by the citizens of Simcoe county. It's very similar to the money Mr Tascona wants spent through his private member's resolution on PSA testing, very similar to money well spent when you look at breast cancer screening clinics for women and also to the money we spent recently on flu shots throughout the whole province. I hope this will be a good sign for all the hospitals and emergency wards over the next few months, particularly around the Christmas season. I know the last couple of years a number of our emergency wards were tied up because of the flu, and the lack of heavy shots before that.

I'll stop at this time talking on the Supply Act and leave my remaining time to the member for Durham.

M^{me} Claudette Boyer : Il est vraiment malheureux que nous soyons en Chambre ce soir pour débattre de cette motion d'approvisionnement qui ne touche aucunement la vie des Ontariens et des Ontariennes, quand il y a tellement de dossiers importants sur lesquels on pourrait s'attarder.

Early childhood is a topic about which we should all be concerned, no matter on which side of the House we sit. Yet, today we are asked to debate the supply bill, which is basically irrelevant to the lives of Ontarians. I

think it is our duty in the House to talk about issues that matter to Ontarians. It's time to put people first.

Recently, a government-commissioned study entitled *Early Years Study: Reversing the Real Brain Drain*, undertaken by Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain, was released. Its findings reveal some interesting information. The study indicates that a child's brain development in the years before three sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health. This government's own commission has shown that early childhood development is absolutely essential to our children's future. But while this is known to be true, let's have a look at what the Harris government has done to ensure that our children are given a shot at succeeding in life.

Since the Harris government was first elected, social assistance has been cut by 22%. Today, children make up 42% of those who visit food banks in Ontario, and families with children are the fastest-growing group of homeless people. According to a recent report on poverty, 52% of urban Aboriginal children live in poverty, yet the Minister of Social Services refuses to meet with Aboriginal leaders to discuss this problem.

Campaign 2000 reports that one in five Ontario children lives in poverty. The Ontario 2000 auditor's report on children's aid services concludes that the Ministry of Social Services had insufficient assurance that children's needs were adequately assessed and that appropriate protection services had been provided in these instances. This speaks nothing of the Harris government cutbacks which touch children indirectly, such as its cuts to the funding of women's shelters, cuts to domestic violence helplines, and its recent labour legislation which will in effect force parents to work longer hours more often and be away from their kids for longer periods of time.

This government has made some strides toward helping children but it has not gone far enough. I would never suggest the Harris government is deliberately working against the interests of our children. I know this government is composed of members who have children and grandchildren and that they care about their development. But where I part company with this government is in its philosophy.

This government believes that the way we help children is by offering tax cuts. Well, tax cuts alone are not the answer.

Une réduction d'impôts n'a jamais construit de garderies, n'a jamais nourri un enfant qui a faim. Une réduction d'impôts n'a jamais libéré de places de surplus dans une garderie.

2100

Il faut vraiment s'attaquer à la pauvreté chez les jeunes de façon active. Ce n'est pas assez de couper les impôts et d'espérer que le petit montant d'argent sauvé sera suffisant pour faire vivre nos jeunes dans un environnement sain et enrichissant.

Je sais que ce gouvernement ne sera pas content d'entendre ce que j'ai à dire, parce que je vais le dire, que

pour le bien-être de nos enfants, il faut dépenser de l'argent. Il faut y mettre l'argent nécessaire. Il faut dépenser de l'argent pour assurer que nos jeunes puissent bénéficier de tous les avantages que peut alimenter notre économie écolatante.

I will give credit to this government for at least recognizing that something needs to be done with regard to early childhood education. The Early Years Study, the challenge fund and Ontario's Promise are all initiatives that are welcome by those who care about early education development. But once again the message the government is sending with these pieces of legislation is that the government's role in fixing the real problems facing early childhood development is that of a supervisor instead of a provider.

Two of its most recent announcements, the challenge fund and Ontario's Promise, are government-led initiatives which require little work or imagination on the government's behalf. In both cases it is the private sector that must do the work. The government says that one of its top priorities is early childhood education, yet it leaves the responsibility primarily up to the private sector.

With Ontario's Promise, for example, the Harris government says it is committed to Ontario's young people, yet with Ontario's Promise it relies on donations from the business sector and offers virtually no government resources.

Le gouvernement doit faire plus que de simplement gérer les ressources du secteur privé. Si ce gouvernement est vraiment sérieux lorsqu'il nous dit que la petite enfance est une priorité, il doit donc agir de façon à nous démontrer que c'est vrai. Pourquoi le gouvernement Harris a-t-il peur d'investir de l'argent dans les programmes sociaux ? Pourquoi le gouvernement Harris refuse-t-il d'investir dans le futur de nos jeunes enfants ? Les réponses sont devant nos yeux. La pauvreté chez les jeunes enfants est un problème social que nous devons éliminer. Mais pour ce faire, nous avons besoin d'un gouvernement qui voit nécessaire de prioriser les dossiers de la petite enfance.

Une étude fédérale il y a quelques années démontrait tristement que 65 % des enfants âgés de moins de six ans dans la ville de Vanier, une partie de mon comté, vivaient sous le seuil de la pauvreté. Ce chiffre est bien au-delà du nombre national de 20 %, qui lui-même est trop élevé. À l'aube de ce nouveau millénaire, il n'y a pas lieu d'avoir encore autant de pauvreté dans notre province.

I encourage the Harris government to take a lead and meet its responsibility to the children of Ontario. I encourage the Harris government to do more than simply turn to the private sector for help. Corporate Ontario is not responsible for our children. We should not be asking banks, corporations and private businesses to look after the well-being of our children.

Ontarians need to know they can turn to the government for help when they need it. Ontarians need to know that the government cares about their concerns and is trying to address them. By passing the buck to the private

sector, the Harris government is saying that early childhood development is just another issue best handled by the private sector. This is unacceptable.

The private sector has a role to play in developing a positive future for our children, but that role needs to be a supporting, not a starring, role. The whole reason for having a government in the first place is to manage the resources at its disposal in order to foster and nurture the collective well-being of citizens. Let me ask you, what resource is more important to the future of our province than our children? How better to ensure a bright future for Ontario than to invest in our children in their most formative years? How terribly sad that the Harris government doesn't recognize it all the time.

Nous avons besoin d'un gouvernement qui prend ses responsabilités. Nous avons un gouvernement qui n'a pas de vision démontrant comment il veut diriger cette province vers l'avenir. Pour Dalton McGuinty et le Parti libéral, la petite enfance a toujours été une priorité et la sera toujours. Nous croyons sur ce côté que ça prend plus que de simples réductions d'impôts pour assurer un futur adéquat pour nos jeunes. Un gouvernement libéral fera tout en son pouvoir pour réduire la pauvreté chez les jeunes. C'est primordial.

Je suis fière des jeunes enfants de mon comté. J'ai à cœur leur bien-être. Je veux qu'ils aient accès à tous les moyens possibles pour fonctionner à leur plein potentiel.

Enfin, je vais prendre cette occasion pour souhaiter à tous mes collègues de la Législature un joyeux Noël et, bien sûr, les mêmes souhaits à tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

May the season find you all in good spirits and in good health. May the new year be the best of all for everyone.

Permettez-moi, avant de terminer, de vous parler d'un événement dont je suis fière. Comme vous avez tous pu le constater, vous avez reçu une carte de Noël de la députée d'Ottawa-Vanier. Ma carte de Noël a été un concours de dessin chez les jeunes de maternelle et jardin de mon comté.

I have received overwhelming feedback in response to my holiday card contest open to junior and senior kindergartens from across the four school boards in my riding. Four drawings were chosen to become the Ottawa-Vanier MPP's Christmas card.

En tant que parente, ex-enseignante et grand-maman, ce fut un réel plaisir pour moi de retourner dans les écoles et de voir l'excitation dans les visages des enfants à l'approche du temps des fêtes.

It was rewarding to see their excitement. It's so important to believe in early childhood.

Quelle joie, et quelle excellente façon d'amorcer la saison des fêtes en collaboration avec notre petite enfance.

Believe me, it is worth investing in early childhood. Merci.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): As the audience probably wonders why the members are talking about such a great variety of topics tonight, I

think it should be pointed out that this is a supply motion that we're dealing with which basically allows the government to pay its bills while Parliament is not in session, so greater latitude is given to allow people to talk about various subjects.

As you know, we get many news releases from the government, and the one that struck me today states that the province is to review the property assessment process and that Marcel Beaubien, the MPP from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, has been appointed as special adviser.

We all know that when the province promised to bring in market value assessment, it didn't do so. They called it current value assessment, but basically the same definition is used in both acts. The people of Ontario were left with the belief some two or three years ago that we were going to a market value system. We now know that's not the case. As many thousands of people are finding out clear across this province, how the government and the property assessment corporation interpret market value assessment is not the way you and I interpret market value assessment. You and I say market value is whatever a willing buyer is willing to pay to a willing seller at a given moment for a particular piece of property. That's the way it was explained to us in the House; that's what is was intended to be. We now know that's not the case and that there are over 600,000 appeals pending.

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I would urge the people of Ontario, particularly those who feel their properties have been assessed too high, to get a hold of the Ministry of Finance, and particularly Mr Beaubien, who is the special adviser who's looking into Ontario Property Assessment Corp, because he will conduct, according to his press release, a comprehensive review of the regulation that defines property classification. I would suggest that all those people who filed appeals get hold of Mr Beaubien as well, since he's to report by March 31.

The next thing I want to talk about is that much has been said here tonight about how the government is spending more money on health care than ever before, and yes, to a certain amount, that's true. But let's also remember what the Provincial Auditor pointed out in the report he unveiled last week: that the government is looking at announcements that are made with respect to capital funding and reporting them in its financial statements as if those dollars are actually spent in the year the announcement is made, when in fact the dollars aren't spent for another two or three years. So it obviously looks as if they're spending a heck of a lot more money in this given year on health care, particularly in the restructuring area, than they're actually doing.

Let me quote to you, from a couple of sections, what the Provincial Auditor has stated, because it isn't only happening in health care, it's also happening in other fields. I'll read this to you:

"Over the last few years, there has been a trend in Ontario to approve and treat as a current year's expenditures grants and other transfers that are provided to fund the activities of future periods. These types of transactions

are particularly attractive to governments in years when revenues exceed expenditures and the amount of the surplus is greater than that expected and budgeted," which was the case last year. It says that "such transfers can distort annual operating results."

It goes on to say that in the May 2000 budget, "\$1 billion in capital grant funding ... was based on plans submitted by each hospital prior to March 31, 2000." It included the 70% that the province is supposed to pay as well as the 30% that is to come from the local taxpayers. "The government recorded the entire \$1 billion as a liability and expenditure for the 1999-2000 fiscal year. The actual funds were advanced to the hospitals shortly after the budget announcement in May 2000." Finally the auditor says, "I firmly believe the practice of charging multi-year funding to the current year's operations must cease."

In other words, the government may be saying it's spending \$22 billion on health care funding, but it's not doing so. It is including the announcements in that amount of about a billion dollars of work that will actually be done later on. And then, as is well known by this government, when they actually do start some of these projects later on, they will announce them again, thereby having people believe there's new money coming in all the time.

This government, over the last five years, has been well known to do this time and again. You make an announcement, you don't really spend the money until some time later on and you make the announcement again. Just as a matter of interest, it's done the same thing with respect to a number of other items; for example, the \$500 million to the Ontario Innovation Trust, which I think is a good idea. Last year it shows that \$500 million was spent, but in actual fact, the auditor says, only \$2.5 million in the trust funds had been expended by March 31. Even if you take into account the commitments, there was only another \$158 million in commitments. He states that the actual disbursements and commitments amounted to only \$160 million, not the \$500 million the government says it's spending there. In other words, the government is trying to make it look as if it is doing a lot more in these areas than it's really doing.

With the Minister of Education in the House, I think she'd be interested in knowing that it goes on to say, dealing with the education budget, that the budget of May 2000 "also announced support of \$268 million to four district school boards," and that actually that money was not expended until this year, so again it looks as if there was \$268 million more spent in education funding than was actually the case.

The other issue I very quickly want to bring up once again, and I've talked about this before, is this whole question of the doctor shortage. Depending upon whose numbers you want to believe, the government says there's a shortage of about 400 doctors in the province; other figures indicate it may be closer to 800 to 1,000 doctors. The government believes it's really doing something in that regard. I think this year they added

something like 55 new spaces in medical schools and they also increased the number of foreign-trained doctors who may go into a residency situation by 12.

I say to the government once again that there are many foreign-trained doctors—I know a few of them who have made their cases known to me—people who are competent and qualified, as we certainly want them to be, who basically have to jump over hurdle after hurdle in order to get approved to practise medicine in this province. Let me once again say I truly believe these people ought to be competent according to our standards. We have over 200 of these foreign-trained individuals, many of whom are working as cleaners, as taxi drivers, in a lot of different work areas, but not practising medicine.

I say to the government, if we have a shortage, whether it's 400 or 800 family physicians in this province, why don't we take advantage of these individuals? Why don't we try to qualify these people as quickly as possible? Why don't we put pressure on the College of Physicians and Surgeons and on the Ontario Medical Association and get these people approved? Over 200 people wait year after year to write the necessary exams. I do not understand why community after community has to go without doctors in this province when we've got this valuable resource of individuals who have been trained somewhere else. Why don't we allow these people to practise in the province of Ontario, or at least allow them to write the necessary exams as quickly as possible? What the government has done in this particular area is minuscule at best.

Finally, I want to talk to you very briefly about the education peace plan that was announced this weekend by my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and our education critic, Gerard Kennedy. Opposition parties are always criticized for not coming up with suggested solutions to problems. We know that within our education system the morale is at an all-time low. We know that teachers are overstressed and overworked and that many students across this province are not getting the benefit of extracurricular activities. I would once again ask the minister, who is in the House today, to take a look at this plan. It has been accepted by some people as being workable.

Basically, what it would do is allow you to meet your target of a teacher teaching 1,050 minutes per week in school by extending each teaching period in a high school by eight minutes so that each individual teacher in effect would teach 30 more minutes. At the same time, the teachers would not be placed in the position where in effect they would have to teach four classes in a semester system. They would still be teaching three classes, three periods of close to 90 minutes. I would ask the Minister of Education to take a very serious look at this plan. Don't reject it out of hand just because it comes from the opposition. The government side is always asking us, "Why don't you come up with some positive solutions?" This education peace plan is the positive solution to a very difficult problem. It's really a win-win solution. The government wins because the teachers have more teaching time. The students win because they hopefully

will get their extracurricular activities back. Everybody wins in that situation. After all, it's for the benefit of our young students, so I ask the minister to take a look at the education peace plan and implement it as soon as possible.

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The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's certainly a distinct pleasure to be able to rise, with the very limited amount of time I have, to speak on behalf of the people of my riding. I want to make it very clear from the very beginning that the first and most important responsibility I have is to represent the interests of my constituents. One of the members earlier took far more time than he was entitled to, which leaves me a mere five minutes to get the message out.

We're really speaking, I believe, on a supply bill, which allows me as one of the members of the government caucus to speak on a number of subjects.

I want to pay a little bit of respect to my constituents in the riding of Durham. Arguably, it's one of the finest ridings, as the Minister of Agriculture said, in all of Ontario. There would be those who would dispute that—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: —perhaps some are here tonight—but it's one of the top two ridings in the province of Ontario, according to him.

First of all, I was speaking to one of my constituents. I can't reveal the name because of the freedom-of-information issue that's before us; Mr Galt would know all about that. But one of my constituents by the name of Helen called and said, "John"—they all know me as John—"you never speak about the ordinary people." You should know that that's exactly who I represent, the ordinary people.

Speaking from the heart, frequently when I'm up—I'm not up that frequently, but frequently when I'm up—I speak about the importance of agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture is here. He's been to my riding innumerable times and has always made himself available on the issues, whether it's the price of commodities or the market revenue issue, which I know he very strongly supports. I know he's trying to get Lyle Vanclief to—you know, the Liberals quite often, even here in the House, aren't up to the job, but he challenged them. He made sure that Ontario farmers get their fair share.

The last time I was up, I was speaking about the important initiatives by Minister Margaret Marland on children, and Ontario's Promise has been mentioned here tonight. There are five key commitments that this government has made, and I can assure you as a member of that caucus advisory committee that we put that as the paramount way of bringing Ontario into the future: looking after our children and making sure they have the right resources in their family, in a secure place and with a good education, to get them to be secure citizens in this province of Ontario.

Tonight, as a member of the Red Tape Commission, I want to review a number of important initiatives. Mr

Spina has recently been appointed to the Red Tape Commission as the co-chair. They've made a commitment to eliminate barriers to small business, and that's probably going to be my primary focus. This small brochure—this isn't an aid—is *The Red Tape Commission Wants to Help You*. It's a little booklet, and if you ever want to find out more, you can contact us at the Web site, www.redtape.gov.on.ca, and you'll get many of the initiatives.

We had a very interesting briefing today by one of the deputy minister's people on excellence in the public civil service today. Government members, as elected people, are only one of the important agents to bring about reform in Ontario. The strategic commitments here are to providing strong leadership and quality service, increasing public satisfaction with Ontario's public service. "Ontario will measure up to the external benchmarks in the private and public sector," and the Ontario public service will be viewed as quality organizations to measure against.

I think the best way to look at that, for example, would be if someone lost their wallet. How many federal, provincial, and municipal organizations would you have to call—outside of the private sector, credit cards and everything—to actually solve the problem? What we're trying to develop is one window with no barriers to solving consumers' problems.

I think the most important initiative is to look at trying to organize government along the lines of providing not barriers but service. Quality service is focused not just on business but on recognizing ordinary people's needs, measuring it against the best standards in the world. It's being measured through ongoing learning improvements and requiring sustained commitments and leadership from the top. That means eliminating all the barriers that are often—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Sergio: I'm delighted to join the debate on this motion tonight as we move toward the end of the session.

Let me say in the few minutes I have that over the last few years we have heard the government, and especially the Premier, say, "We are not the government. We are the ones who came to fix the government." If we look at the five or six years of Premier Harris's Conservative government, we know the kind of government they delivered. We know what they did to fix the government.

I want to make some comments and use not necessarily my own words, but comments from someone who is non-elected, non-partisan and who is not part of either side of this House. It is someone who has been appointed by the government to be independent and to keep an eye on the actions and deeds of this government. I'm speaking of the Ontario auditor, Mr Erik Peters. I want to make some comments and to quote directly from his report, which I think members are aware came down on November 21 this year.

It was entitled the Special Report on Accountability and Value for Money. This perhaps should have been the leading text of one of the government bills. They pride

themselves on attaching such text to practically every bill they introduce in the House. It would have done justice to the government if they had introduced a bill that would have given the Ontario taxpayers exactly that, and I mean accountability and value for their money. But I have to say the auditor found the management of this government for the last four or five years in terrible, sad shape, even worse than the previous NDP government. My goodness, how bad do you have to be to beat that record?

Let me read a couple of quotes. This is some the language the auditor used. He revealed growing government waste, boondoggles and possible corruption. Those are heavy words: "possible corruption." How about that? "Waste and lack of accountability are on the rise under the fiscally tight-fisted Tories." "Tories face growing problems related to privatization, outsourcing and arm's-length delivery of public service." I'll come back to that.

I quote directly from the report: "Last year's report and this year's report have more serious problems than previous ones." "Inspections of ... water treatment plants declined ... from over 400 to about 190 a year, over the past five years." Shall we say why we have Walkerton? I wonder if the Premier and the government are taking note of that. Just some of the content of that report.

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Unfortunately I don't have time to really sift through all the report, but just to mention a couple of the major things, first of all he said the credit rating of this government is even worse than the credit rating of Mr Rae's government. Do you know what this does to the debt, the \$24 billion the government has added to the total debt since 1995? We are paying through the nose. Taxpayers are paying more because of the very poor rating they have accumulated.

What does the auditor say? They have spent some \$500 million on things such as VCRs, TVs, computers, with no records. No one knows because there are no records and nothing is on hand. If a private corporation had a record like this, everybody would be fired. They would have built one huge bill and accused everybody of total corruption.

Half of the \$60 billion the government spends is funnelled through private companies, private corporations and non-profit agencies. This is not me saying this. Maybe they don't like it, but that's too bad. Half of that \$60 billion that is spent is funnelled through private corporations, private companies, non-profit agencies and other delivery agents that don't have to answer to the taxpayer. Isn't that wonderful? More than \$30 billion of taxpayers' money and they are not accountable to this House, to this Premier, to this government, to the people of Ontario. Isn't that wonderful? What does that say for accountability of this government?

You know, \$750 million—no way of ensuring those funds were spent in a wise manner. Do we know that? Do taxpayers know that? They wouldn't unless we had an independent person such as the auditor, Mr Peters, to dig that out and shove it in the face of the government and say, "This is the record of your government."

I wonder what happened to the whiz kids. The government gave somebody, some of their friends, some of their companies, \$275 million to transfer Ontario land titles on to computers—I don't know how many there are, probably a few million. But \$275 million sounds like a lot of money. I wonder, if we were to tender that publicly, openly, to some of the Ontario computer whiz kids over there—the auditor says you guys are up to \$1 billion and it's not going to take one year but 10. Is this accountability?

My time is slipping by, but I want to mention a couple of other factors which, I should say, are not appropriate for this time of the year but are appropriate to the actions of this government. I want to address very briefly the situation of the poor people in our province, not only the poor people but the poor young people. Young kids living below the poverty line have almost doubled in Ontario. With the well-being and the economic boom we have in Ontario, I think it's totally unacceptable that we have such a terrible record. This was in the December 16 Globe and Mail—sometimes it's a Liberal paper. It's right in here: the number of children living in poverty has climbed by some 400,000, or 42%, since 1989 and has nearly doubled in Ontario. How shameful.

This is from the December 18 Maclean's-Global Television poll: they don't mention the economy, employment or unemployment, spending, national unity, crime, violence, whatever any more. They pinpoint, at 45%, social services, health and education as the most important problems facing Canadians and Ontarians. Are you listening, Mr Premier? Are you listening, Mr Harris? Where is the priority? For 45%, it is social services, health and education.

Today I brought to the attention of the Minister of Health the case of a woman who is in a very dire situation. Because of breast cancer, she has developed a condition called lymphedema. She has to travel all the way from the Eglinton and Steeles area to Scarborough General to receive treatment from a machine that is only at that place. She doesn't drive and her husband doesn't drive. She has to travel in these weather conditions to receive the treatments; otherwise she won't get any treatments. I was asking the minister today, why not provide one of those machines in the west end of the city? She didn't answer. She said, "We've been spending a lot of money. The service should be there." The fact is that the service, the care, is not there.

While I have another few minutes, I will concede the remaining time to my colleague to continue in the same tone.

Merry Christmas to all.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Renfrew-Pembroke-Nipissing.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Renfrew will do just fine.

I want to join the supply debate and simply say that this is one of those important debates, one of Parliament's most basic of rights and responsibilities. The old

call: "There shall be no supply, said Parliament, without a redress of our grievances." Nobody probably cares about it any more since we live in this age of executive tyranny, but that is the principle, and if ever this place gets to a point where it understands its institutional prerogatives, God knows what might happen.

I'm glad to have the Minister of Education here tonight because there is an issue that is very much on the minds of people, certainly in my county and I think in much of the province, and that has to do with special education funding.

I've been in touch with her staff, and they have committed to talk to people at the Renfrew county public school board, but I want to say to the minister, who is a very hard-working minister, I'm told and I believe, that there does seem to be a real issue with the validation rate. I have in front of me a chart. I met a few weeks ago with some people at the Renfrew county public school board, good people, long experienced in this business, and people who are quite prepared to say, "Listen, a number of the funding changes that have been made by the current government have been advantageous," but they are really puzzled by what they're seeing in the validation rate.

Let me just give you the three years: in 1998-99 our public school board had an approval rate of about 98%, in 1999-2000 it dropped to 63% and for this year it looks like the approval rate will be below 40%. They are absolutely mystified at the board office. The superintendent of special ed and a number of others who are very, very knowledgeable about and experienced with the old procedures and the new formula just don't understand what's happening here. I don't expect an answer tonight, I say to the minister, and I want to credit her staff, who listened to my general summary a few days ago and have committed to talking to Russ Holmberg, who's the superintendent at the public school board.

But I want to take tonight's supply debate opportunity to reinforce a very serious concern of people who are very professional and who are looking at this and saying, "There's something wrong here," and they don't know what it is. They have told me that they have been very careful and prudent as to the files they have developed and submitted. They are not a board, they tell me, that has submitted a lot of bogus cases, expecting the Ministry of Education to clean them out. But they have now got an approval rate that is down below 40%, and that has implications of a very dramatic and deleterious kind to the special education students in my county. So I want to take that moment tonight to ask the minister for her review of that. I do hope there is some positive answer to the concerns that have been made by my public school board in Renfrew county.

I was struck as well by a report in today's National Post, a journal I read with great interest. The article by Tom Blackwell, "Retiring Teachers Ring Alarm Bells"—I was astonished to see those numbers. They may not be accurate, but it's stated in this article that for the next five years the expectation over at the College of Teachers is

that something like an average of 9,000 teachers will retire. If that's remotely accurate, that's 40,000 to 50,000 retirements over the next five years. That is going to provide a lot of opportunity, obviously, but it's certainly going to aggravate an issue that my colleagues and I'm sure the minister's colleagues have been raising, namely, an adequate supply of qualified teachers in the classroom.

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I meant to bring it and I didn't, but there was a very interesting study done by a blue-ribbon panel in the United States a couple of years ago. One of the findings it made on the basis of that which really improves the educational results we all want was that it was very important, according to this analysis—granted, an American one, but fairly recent—that few things were as important as having a qualified teacher teaching in the classroom or the library or the resource centre in an area where he or she had specialized training.

It wasn't just a matter of having a qualified teacher in the classroom, but it was even more important to have the chemistry specialist teaching chemistry and to have the English specialist teaching English. I draw to the House's attention that if these data are at all accurate, we are really faced with an extraordinary challenge. I hope the minister and her officials are looking at some extraordinary measures that in my view would be justified to meet the requirement that we make every effort to ensure there are qualified teachers with specialization in the areas, particularly in areas like science and mathematics, and that that be done.

Certainly in my part of the province we're now finding that people like the high-tech community in Ottawa-Carleton are becoming a really magnetic pole for people who are in the school system and are now finding that they can go and work for Nortel or Cisco or Alcatel and earn substantially more money.

At any rate, there's a lot said and done about what's good and bad with the school system. If we have 40,000 to 50,000 qualified teachers retiring, I hope we have a plan to have 40,000 to 50,000 qualified teachers ready to take those places.

Speaking about my part of the province—and the parliamentary assistant for transportation is here tonight; I think the member for Etobicoke North—there was a report in the Ottawa Citizen on the weekend about the increasing gridlock around, yes, Ottawa. I was in a bookstore in Arnprior on Friday afternoon and a couple of my constituents who live in south Renfrew and who work in the Ottawa area were complaining, and complaining rather vociferously, that on Friday, for example, it took something like 90 minutes to go from downtown Ottawa to Arnprior, a distance of about 60 kilometres. In fact, I was listening to a radio program in Ottawa on Friday afternoon and virtually all of the guests who were supposed to be at this program—

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Because of the snow.

Mr Conway: Well, it wasn't a snowy day on Friday in Ottawa, and it's a real issue. It's a real issue for people

in Ottawa, but I'll tell you a lot of people I represent living in communities like Arnprior, Braeside, McNab, Renfrew and Calabogie commute daily into Ottawa and they told me in no uncertain terms on Friday at the Arnprior bookstore, "Do something to relieve the congestion in the Ottawa transportation system."

Interjections.

Mr Conway: I've got to compete with this?

The Deputy Speaker: Would the members come to order. If they're going to have private conversations, take them outside.

Mr Conway: It is a serious concern, and I expect my friend Brian Coburn is quoted in the Citizen article on Saturday as saying that the government should be looking at a new ring road from Kanata around to the southeast perimeter of the new Ottawa. It's an issue and my constituents who depend on good access in and out of the national capital hope the government is going to accelerate plans.

I always like—poor Turnbull's not here tonight but I'm sure he's doing important work elsewhere—to use this opportunity to say, in the most recent statement from the department of the treasury, what are we told? We are told that gasoline taxation revenues are up \$106 million this year. Let me repeat to anybody out there listening: there are now \$2.26 billion worth of gasoline tax revenues coming to Queen's Park.

Mr O'Toole: Run for Ottawa.

Mr Conway: If you want to run for Ottawa, I say to O'Toole, you missed your chance. Lots of people want to run municipally and federally. I just assume I'm looking at and working with 103 people who really want to be here.

All I'm saying is that we have \$2.26 billion of gasoline tax revenues, \$106 million more this year than last year. Add to that \$665 million of fuel tax revenues and \$920 million worth of motor vehicle and registration fees, and that gives you some \$3.8 million worth of road-related taxes. We are spending, we are told, \$1 billion on the roads system. That's good, but it is roughly one third of the road-related taxation we are taking in.

In my part of the world, let me tell you, where there's little public transport, people are prepared to pay these road taxes, but they expect that the road taxes are going to be reinvested in road-related activities, that you're not going to be cutting income taxes and corporate taxes and depending, to a greater degree, on road-related taxes to fund general government programs. That is, for my constituents and people in rural Oxford, a tax on geography. That's not fair and it is very dangerous in a province like Ontario.

Yes, there have been some good works done, but I repeat: There are very real needs out there in my part of the province where the good news is, as my friend Stewart was saying earlier this afternoon, "The economy is doing well." It certainly is doing well around Ottawa. People in Ottawa and Arnprior are expecting that we are going to reinvest some of those dividends to assist with those road-related activities.

Let me say something about a health-related issue in eastern Ontario. I have been struck by the number of people, many of them older people, living in places like Petawawa and Barry's Bay and Eganville and Beachburg and Chalk River who, in the last number of months, have had their surgery cancelled at the Ottawa Hospital because there has been an insufficient number of medical surgical beds.

Why is that the case? Because we are told that up to 15% of the active treatment or medical surgical beds at the Ottawa Hospital are tied up with people who don't need those beds, who need an alternative level of care, but there are insufficient nursing and chronic care beds. Can you imagine being a 75-year-old woman coming from the upper reaches of Killaloe or Barry's Bay and being told that you've got surgery, going through the pre-op preparation, going two hours down the highway and being told at the operating door, "Sorry, we can't deal with you." That's happened more than once.

I don't expect magical cures, but we have taken a lot of the flexibility out of the system. I know those were the bad old days. This bed blocking is a very serious issue, not just for people in—

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Bed wetting?

Mr Conway: I don't think you want—

Mr Murdoch: I remember when you joined the NDP—

Mr Conway: This is a very serious subject. There are many of us here, Bill, who want to know if you're going to leave the Social Credit and join a Conservative Party. That day may come before I depart the scene.

This bed-blocking business is a very serious issue. It is affecting real people with real medical needs. The answer clearly is, in part, for the minister to licence additional alternative level of care beds, not just in Ottawa but in places like Renfrew and Pembroke—

Mr Sampson: And Eganville.

Mr Conway: My friend the former minister of corrections says, "And Eganville." We will take as many of those beds as we can in Renfrew county.

I'm not here to be too self-centred or too parochial, but I'm telling you, I have had too many constituents, some of them very closely associated with the current administration in the province of Ontario, very unhappy about the fact that, not once but in some cases twice they've gone down the road to Ottawa for surgery and been told, "Sorry. Go home. We don't know when we're going to be able to take you." The head of the medical staff at the Renfrew hospital was quoted just a couple of weeks ago as saying he had five patients in Renfrew who are in this situation.

It's serious and something that deserves some attention, and I hope that before supply is granted, my friend the Minister of Health will have more—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. We have concluded the time available for debate.

Mr Wilson has moved second reading of Bill 169, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the

Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2001.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Pursuant to standing order 63, the bill is ordered for third reading.

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SUPPLY ACT, 2000

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2000

Mr Baird moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2001 / *Projet de loi 169, Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2001.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

CORRECTIONS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION EN MATIÈRE DE SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

Mr Baird moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to establish accountability in correctional services, to make offenders demonstrate that they are drug-free, to set rules for offenders to earn their release, to give the Board of Parole a say in earned release decisions, and to change the name of the Board of Parole / *Projet de loi 144, Loi visant à instituer la responsabilisation au sein des services correctionnels, à obliger les délinquants à démontrer qu'ils ne font pas usage de substances intoxicantes, à fixer les règles que doivent suivre les délinquants pour mériter leur libération, à permettre à la Commission des libérations conditionnelles d'intervenir dans les décisions en matière de libération méritée et à changer le nom de la Commission des libérations conditionnelles.*

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): It's a pleasure to participate in the debate on third reading of this bill. What is interesting about this bill is that the debate to this point has been rather fascinating. When we started, really what we had was debate polarized around the issue of whether privatization was good or bad. What was interesting in the discussions was that as we started to move forward, when we started to talk about the actual bill itself, we noticed that a number of Liberal members

started to realize that public-private partnerships are not something foreign to all levels of government, that as a matter of fact some of them had participated in private-public partnerships as municipal politicians and had made decisions to go down that road. So the debate kind of veered away from private-public partnership, good and bad, and got into discussion around the issue of safety.

The member for Sudbury, for example, is quoted as saying, "I think we must ensure that the people of Ontario understand that this bill is not about privatization. It should be about public safety. On this side of the House, both parties believe that public safety should be the factor that determines anything." I was very pleased at that point that they had realized private-public partnerships were something that had become part of the norm for all levels of government. In terms of safety, the reality is that if we provide tough ministry standards for operation and performance, if we ensure the Ministry of Correctional Services maintains—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Speaker: I certainly don't want to detract from this member, who I understand to be the parliamentary assistant for health, but I would just like to ask for your ruling. This bill has been called for third reading tonight. It stands in the name of the minister of corrections. Neither the minister of corrections nor his parliamentary assistant is taking carriage of this bill. I'm asking you to find out whether that is appropriate. Is it parliamentary?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): It is in order. The Minister of Community and Social Services moved the bill.

Mr Clark: I thank the member for Kingston and the Islands for his comment.

Again, if it's an issue of safety and the ministry puts in place standards to ensure that safety is there, to ensure the public interest is in place, then really it becomes an issue that there are at least, in my reading, seven members of the opposition who support drug treatment for prisoners, which is another part of the bill, and who don't have a problem with public-private partnerships. So it's going to be interesting.

I sit here and feel like the little kid at Christmastime waiting to open up that gift and see what's inside. I'm waiting to see whether there are members on the opposition side who are actually going to stand up and have the courage to vote with the government on this bill. The members for St Catharines, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Kingston and the Islands, York Centre, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Thunder Bay-Atikokan and Davenport did support a resolution dealing with drug treatment, which is a very important part of Bill 144. If the reality is that public-private partnerships happen in the federal government, in provincial governments and in regional governments, and they do—the Hamilton-Wentworth airport is a public-private partnership. If you're going to compare a correctional facility to an airport for safety, I think there would be more concerns in a community about an airport—747s flying in with

ground control and traffic controllers. Yet the regional government of Hamilton-Wentworth privatized that, a public-private partnership.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): How's it going?

Mr Clark: It's going extremely well, as a matter of fact. Passenger traffic is up, cargo traffic is up and there have been no difficulties with safety. So again you're looking at a private-public partnership working.

I'm looking at this and thinking to myself, there have to be at least seven members over there. The new member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot made a very interesting comment in the debate—

Mr Sampson: He was probably in favour of it.

Mr Clark: He was in favour of it. This one comment I want to come to in my last minute on the whole issue of values: "I believe ... that while we should only have the government we need, we must insist on all the government we require." Sounds Conservative.

Mr Sampson: Is he a Liberal, though?

Mr Clark: He is a Liberal.

When you read it, he actually supports drug testing. The member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot was on the regional government when they brought in a private-public partnership for the airport, so clearly he supports private-public partnerships. As a matter of fact, the regional government in Hamilton has one for water and sewage treatment. So I can't see him opposing this bill.

I recall that shortly after his election the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, Liberal Ted McMeekin—this is in the *Hamilton Spectator*—"vows he isn't going to be a desk-thumping seal like so many other backbenchers at Queen's Park."

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Mr Sampson: He called them seals?

Mr Clark: Yes, he did. "He says he won't applaud if party leader Dalton McGuinty says something silly in the Legislature, and he'll stand up and say, 'Well done' if Premier Mike Harris says something smart." But then the columnist asked this question. It's an important question. We should be listening. "The real test of McMeekin's political courage, of course, will be whether he actually votes with the Tories on a government bill."

Mr Sampson: Do you think he will?

Mr Clark: I think the question has come. I have faith in him. I look at this present. I'm going to unwrap this present in a couple of days and I think the member is going to vote in favour of this bill. He supports drug treatment. He supports private-public partnerships. Heck, he passed two of them when he was a regional councillor and he has vowed not to be a desk-thumping seal.

Mr Sampson: But he'll fold like the rest of them.

Mr Clark: No, I don't believe that. I don't believe that for a moment. I believe he will come through for us.

I don't know what's going to happen, but there are seven of them plus one who supported the drug treatments. Now the question becomes, will Mr McGuinty get to them? Will Mr McGuinty and Dominic the whip

actually whip them into line to oppose this bill? What we do see, ladies and gentleman at home, is the absenting. I challenge him not to absent himself from the vote. He should be here and vote in favour of this because it makes sense.

At the end of the day, what you end up having here is that I know we have seven members, maybe more, on the Liberal benches who agree that as to private-public partnerships, all governments should have the opportunity to explore that. We agree you should have the opportunity to explore. The issue of safety we can deal with through standards and regulations. It's being done right now, my goodness, to the member shaking "no" over there. The airport in Hamilton-Wentworth does it. It's all set in place. It's in force. So if there are private-public partnerships and they believe in drug treatment, I think I'm going to get my Christmas present. I think the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot will vote with the government. This will be the test. We shall see.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Well, let's just get right to it and tell the member for Stoney Creek he's got a sock full of coal coming because it's not going to be the present he's going to expect to have. That's for sure. Unlike the member for Stoney Creek, my intention is to talk about the bill, and the bill says very clearly that in all 39 sections mentioned in Bill 144, nine are used to change the name of the Ontario parole board to the Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board. A whopping nine pieces of that legislation are used just to change the name.

Then we have five or so sections based on drug testing and drug treatment programs. Guess what the rest of the 27 different clauses are all about? Privatization. Why? Because they needed to change all the acts in the public domain to allow it to become privatized. Unlike the member from Stoney Creek, I've done my homework and found out that the success stories he wants to start talking about in the public-private arrangements are nothing but abysmal failures.

I have here a memo written to me by a member who has been involved in corrections for 24 years of his working life. He wants to tell us, "There is also a concern to the host community that a private jail will drain economic activity away from their communities as corporate profits rather than keeping those Ontario tax dollars working for them in their communities in the form of solid, full-time jobs for Ontarians," and that will be drained.

Let me be specific. We're going to talk about \$3.2 million leaving the town of Penetanguishene, from the member for Simcoe North's riding—\$3.2 million in profit drained directly out of that community, out of the province of Ontario and into the private company that decides to bid on this.

Let's talk about the safety that the member for Stoney Creek wanted to remind us about. We have got example after example that we try to explain very clearly, that we

are not just talking about privatization and a public-private partnership, that we're talking about standards that were established around the world, standards that each of these countries, each of these states and each of these jurisdictions established when they wrote the contracts for the private corporations. Guess what? They broke them. They broke every one of them.

Scotland: £160 million more than previously claimed. They were running it at £290 million over 25 years instead of the £130 million agreed to in the contract. Talk about taking the state for a ride by the private sector. Scotland's also having other problems, including the covering up of actual staffing levels when they had an agreement in place, the strong standards the members want to talk about, how the province of Ontario will not have any problems because it's going to write the rules. In every single state, every single country, every single jurisdiction that has had agreements in place, they were broken.

I say to the member from Stoney Creek: get your head out of the sand and wake up to the reality. This is the reality of the day, and you don't want to admit it. Those contracts were all broken. No matter what standards you say Ontario can have, the private corporations broke the standards that were established by those jurisdictions.

Let's talk about private jails already existing. The minister wanted to say to all of us, "Hey, we've already got a private-public success story. It's called Camp Turnaround." Big success story. They cherry-picked every one of the people they put into the institution. They couldn't have any mental disabilities. They couldn't have any record of violence toward anybody. They couldn't have all these kinds of things that were established before they even let them in the camp. Guess what? Their claim for recidivism was that it improved. It actually didn't even improve compared to the other institutions that were run as public institutions. So there's a fallacy unloaded.

We have a solution that was provided to the minister, and this group has yet to receive official approval or even a nod that they're really looking into it. They've got a letter in their hand that simply says, "Thanks for the input. We'll look into it for you." It's called the Alternate Solution, and in the Alternate Solution, this was offered to them. From a member from my riding, he and another expert—over 50 years of experience in the corrections field—offered the solution away from privatization. They offered recidivism reduction.

What did they do? They went through from 1994 on. They also showed that for Burch Correctional Centre, which is destined to close because of the privatization of the mega-jail in Penetanguishene, they have offered a solution to keep the place open and running, at what per diem? Sixty-four dollars per diem, when the province's own mega-jail can't even come close to that—\$30 off. Yet the solution has not been given its just deserts.

This goes on and on. We've got more examples. Monitoring boards, drug testing—we had the member from Stoney Creek doing a flip and a flop. First, he was talking about drug testing, then he was talking about drug

treatment. We don't know exactly what the plan is over there. We have the drug treatment and the drug testing being referred to on a regular basis. We've been giving the minister, since the very beginning of this debate, examples of all the types of technology that are out there. He has said to us, on occasion, "We're going to take a look at it. We're going to possibly invest, but it's awfully expensive, don't you know?"—the xenon sniffers or the X-ray machines that are offered and proposed.

We have one that's really more important to take a look at, but I want to make sure the public recognizes that this was done by this government. A speaker at a demonstration was trying to explain the problems the government is having. His name's Dave Walker. He's an operational manager for Maplehurst complex. Mr Walker was there with Dixie, the dog that is specially trained as an institutional dog, specially trained for correctional facilities. Walker and Dixie were familiar faces at Ontario jails for over 11 years before the Tory government came in, but they cut his work in 1996.

Mr Sampson's scheme to drug-test inmates will do little to cut down on drug smuggling in jails. From 1985 to 1996, 400 searches were conducted in Ontario jails. Correctional service dogs logged over 2,000 drug finds. They found over 250 weapons and caught six escapees. The cancellation of that program has put the health and safety of every single correctional officer in jeopardy.

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Can you imagine the fact that they had such an effective tool already in use for 11 years and they put a stop to it because they didn't know what they were doing in terms of managing our correctional system? What I've been saying since square one is that we have a great foundation that is—it was, at least, until this government came in—a pride and joy, modelled around the world, because the foundation and the framework of the correctional system was seen as a wonderful way to rehabilitate and provide correction at the same time.

And what did this government do? It threw in management that couldn't even manage their way out of a paper bag. The Tory government decided to utilize a free OPP dog to replace Walker and Dixie. They found out that this dog they've gone to is ineffective because it was not trained in corrections situations. They're failing because they're not aware of the unique conditions of the prison environment. We challenge the minister to do the right thing and reinstate the correctional service drug dogs. Then the minister can truthfully say he's fighting drugs in jails. Walker is fighting for the return of Dixie and himself to work. The complaint is still at the Labour Relations Board, for over three years now, waiting for some type of resolution by this minister to show that he's on top of things and can do a good job.

Do you want to know something else they've done? Here's something rather interesting that has just taken place. They got a memo from a privateer who's inside the prisons already, the canteen services people. They stopped smoking from happening so they couldn't make a wad of profit on the sale of cigarettes, so what did they

do? They went to the minister and said, "We need to make some money here, so you've got to expand our list in the canteen." Anybody in corrections knows—I even knew it after the little time I've had to educate myself in this area—that you don't expand the canteen area, because you make the job of the correctional officer twice as hard, three times as hard, by putting in more items to choose from. They've got seven different types of shampoo with seven different designs of bottles. They've got eight different types of soap now, with eight different types of boxes and different designs of soaps.

This might sound simplistic, but what it implies is that they don't know what they're doing. The correctional officers said to them very clearly, "Do not introduce these extra foreign objects. We can't get through the searches for drugs with the canteen material we have already." And they've added over 50 different items on top of it. Why? Because they wanted the canteen people to make a profit. If that isn't a perfect example of what we are going to be facing when the privateers take over our prisons, then I don't know what is.

What is the problem with this government understanding that you don't sit around and try to simply create the business so people can make a lot of money? Or do you want to have a correctional system that's based on what we've been trying to say all along, corrective measures to keep our cities and communities safe? The members on the other side just do not have a clue what corrections are all about anyway. The fact that they've allowed this canteen expansion to take place is an example of how mismanagement started from the very top.

I'll use this analogy: in the sport of hockey, in the NHL, any league, any division, when we start talking about the success rate, in particular professional hockey, you don't sit back and say you've got to fire the entire team. It's time for the coach to go. Well, we've gotten rid of one coach; it's time for the next coach to go, because he's just picking up where the other guy left off and hasn't made any changes. It's time for the coach to leave and management needs to take a good serious look at how we are going to motivate this team.

The reality is that the minister of this particular portfolio, before he had to step down, spent all his time complaining about the absentee rate. He said, "These correctional officers are taking way too much time off." He didn't find out whether or not it was stress-related, whether or not it was sickness. He simply walked in and said, "This is ridiculous. The averages are way too high here." Guess what I found out? I did a little bit more homework. We find out that before 1995—

Interjections.

Mr Levac: They don't like to hear that they haven't done their homework. Member for Simcoe North, you're going to get your lump of coal when it comes time in 2003.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member for Simcoe North, come to order, please. Sorry for the interruption, member for Brant.

Mr Levac: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's rather sad that some people don't like to know that they haven't done their homework. I will complete my thoughts so the member for Simcoe North can do a little homework.

Before 1995, the average absence by a correctional officer was seven days. From 1995 to now it's gone up, and it has skyrocketed since this minister took over. It's now up to around 25 days. That's a management problem. That's not a correctional officers' problem; that's a management problem. When you bring in that much stress, when you bring in that much degradation to these correctional officers, who give day in and day out in this particular job—it's one of those circumstances in which they know it might be their last day because they could be killed on the job.

The fact is that they've done some silly things here and it needs to be pointed out. You don't add that many items to a canteen list without knowing they could be doing some dangerous things with those items coming in and out. Why do I know that? Because we've had a canteen person who was caught, fined and sentenced for smuggling drugs into a correctional facility. They did not know that you shouldn't be expanding the canteen program. Why did they do it? They did it because they wanted the canteen operator to make a profit. If that isn't an example of why this government is headed down the wrong path, I don't know what is. I'm trying to alert the public out there that the privatization issue is a failed experiment from around the world for over 10 years but that they still want to do it.

The member for Stoney Creek wants to tell us that because a private-public operation works in an airport, it's OK to do it in a correctional facility. The member from Fanshawe wants to tell us that no, we've got assurances from the Solicitor General that we're not going to privatize police. But we'll use Stoney Creek's example that we can go into a private partnership with police and firefighters. Let's talk about his logic. His logic is flawed.

Mr Clark: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I never said anything of the kind about privatizing police services.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. The member for Brant, sorry for the interruption.

Mr Levac: The truth hurts and the pain is going to be more evident. The fact is, the logic that the member for Stoney Creek wanted to use was that privatized and public partnerships are fine, hunky-dory everywhere, so let's start doing them all over the place, let's just use the same logic.

The member for Stoney Creek loves to use the phrase "Chicken Little." Let's talk about the reality. The reality is very simple. The failed 10-year experiment in privatization is over. Let's quote the Bible of the Conservatives, *Business Week*: "Private Prisons Don't Work." The business magazine, *Business Week*, speaks for the Conservatives. It doesn't work. Let's get rid of this whole game.

We've only been given 40 minutes to talk about this because of the time allocation. This government should be ashamed of itself for its flaws. Admit you made a mistake. Step back from it and realize that there are some things you don't privatize, like police, like firefighting, like organ donation, like giving blood, like taking the freedom away from our citizens of Ontario.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I want to speak to a couple of things about this bill, a couple of things that concern me, but before I do that, I want to point out that to gain some knowledge about correctional institutions I have visited a couple. Frankly, I don't know how many members of the House have been inside a correctional institution for one reason or another, to at least find out what goes on.

Let me tell you this. I went to an institution for young offenders. This one had some 60 inmates who were in under minimal care and 10 young offenders who were in a lockdown just like any prison institution.

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I went with my federal member, and we had the opportunity to talk to the 10 young offenders who were in the secure lock-up area. I'm sad to say that not one of that 10 had had what I would call a normal life, lived in what you might call a normal family. Those of us who have children—families have their ups and downs and their disagreements, kids will be kids, those kinds of issues. But I came out of there feeling sorry, because those 10 didn't come from what you would call a normal household.

What I was most concerned about was, what are we going to do to help them, what are we going to do to rehabilitate them? Some would suggest that you simply lock the door and throw away the key. That's not the answer. They weren't in there for crimes they weren't going to be released on for the rest of their lives. So at some point in time they're going to be released into society.

My concern was, what are we going to do to rehabilitate them, to help them, so that when they come out into society they might be able to contribute to society and lead a good life? I'm concerned that privatization will have as its bottom line the dollar value and not the value of the character of these young people. That's one reason I am concerned and afraid of privatization.

This summer I visited the provincial jail in Windsor. If anybody wants to even remotely suggest that being in jail is any kind of leisurely, pleasant life, they've got the wrong idea. The real crime at the provincial jail in Windsor is the conditions the staff have to work in. This jail is in excess of 100 years old, it's crowded and it's all chopped up. The living conditions of the inmates are certainly not pleasant, and, as I said, the working conditions for the staff are not pleasant.

Here again I wonder what we're going to do to rehabilitate the people we put into this institution for up to two years. Frankly, when I was there, there was limited recreation and the inmates spent most of the day in an area outside their cells with a picnic table and a TV.

I don't know what the answer is. I don't think simply locking them up is the answer. Somewhere along the way we have to emphasize that rehabilitation is part of it. Again, I'm not so sure the objective of a privately run institution will be rehabilitation.

I don't think this bill is so much an argument about privatization as it is about public safety. When I talk about public safety, there are two issues. One is, how secure will the prisons be? My colleague from Brant has given examples where the rate of escapes from private prisons is higher than from publicly operated facilities. I have to take him at his word; he has the documentation to back that up. So public safety is a concern. How secure are these facilities?

Secondly, and I think as important, is public safety when the inmates are eventually released. On rare occasions do we keep anyone locked up for the rest of their natural life, so rehabilitation becomes the issue. How serious will privately operated prisons be? How much of the funding they receive from the government will they use to rehabilitate those prisoners?

I'm concerned about that. We can use all the regulations we want, we can make all the rules we feel are necessary, but the bottom line of these privately operated facilities is going to be, "Can we make a profit?" They're not going to be there if they can't make a profit. If profit's going to be the bottom line, I'm concerned about how much of that income, that daily stipend they get for an inmate, they are going to put toward rehabilitation. I just don't think the incentive is there.

It's even been suggested in some of the notes I have that the objective of a privately operated facility will be to keep it full. I mean, that's the way to maximize your profits, to get as much as you can: keep the beds full. Will a privately run prison operation attempt to rehabilitate and release as many people as it can, in other words, depopulate our prisons? I doubt that, but that should be one of the objectives. I don't see where there are any incentives to do that.

My colleague from Brant in fact has used examples of where the private operator has tried to maximize the profits even more. In other words, "How can I make more money out of this prison?" I think that's the real issue of public safety: what's going to happen when these prisoners are released?

Drug testing is one of the issues dealt with in this legislation. It introduces a drug-testing program for inmates, parolees, inmates on temporary absence and conditional sentence offenders. Yes, I think we have to do everything we can to keep drugs out of our prisons. I think we have to do everything we can to prevent any kind of stimulant, any kind of drug, entering our prisons. I don't know how they do it. Obviously they get into our institutions somehow. If testing inmates is one of the ways we can attack the problem, then that may be what we have to do. But when I say "attack the problem," the problem is, how then do we treat these inmates? How do we take them off their dependency on drugs? I don't know. I look to my colleague from Brant. Is there

anything in this legislation that would address that situation?

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): You can introduce a private bill.

Mr Crozier: I wouldn't mind introducing a private member's bill if I really thought it would have any kind of success, but oftentimes that isn't the case.

My point is, privately run institutions, I'm afraid, are going to be operated only because of the bottom line. If there aren't incentives to treat inmates because of their drug problem—in fact, many of them come into the institution with a drug problem. We don't have to test them. We probably know even before they come into the institution that they have a problem. But what are we going to do to rehabilitate them?

I don't mean that prisons have to be posh places in which to live. When we send someone to an institution, there should be certain degree of punishment. They've done something wrong and they should pay for it. But they should be able to pay for it with some dignity and they should be able to pay for it with some hope that when they come out, they will be an asset in society and that we haven't treated them in such a way that they're simply going to reoffend. That's what bothers me about privately run institutions.

Quite frankly, the record recently of this government has been to find somebody to blame when things go wrong. When they are privately run institutions, I'm afraid the government will find it too easy to blame someone else. When they are publicly run, when the government's accountable, when we have a minister who has to stand up and be accountable—that's what I think we need. When it comes to penal institutions, they should be run publicly.

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Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's so rare that I actually get to comment on some of this important legislation. These remarks are actually made for the member from Peterborough, as well as the member from Simcoe North, who I know are interested in this issue.

For those who are viewing tonight and those who may be recording this, Bill 144 is An Act to establish accountability—I know the Liberals don't like that—in correctional services, to make offenders demonstrate that they are drug-free—that seems fairly reasonable to me—to set rules for offenders to earn their release, to give the Board of Parole a say in earned release decisions, and to change the name of the Board of Parole.

It's fairly simple. The member from Brant earlier, and the member from Essex more recently, provided a lot of criticism and very little constructive input. I'm here tonight—all of us are—to gather input.

The member from Essex suggested that programs to address drug and alcohol addiction—for instance, Alcoholics Anonymous—should indeed be available to institutions to help treat inmates' addictions. On the other side, clearly they don't want any accountability. It's like the HRDC decisions federally. There's no accountability. That's what disappoints me. For the people administering

our institutions today, who need the tools—I could just relax for a moment and say to the viewer tonight that to think that in our publicly funded institutions, to even accept for a moment that there's drugs and alcohol, is totally unacceptable. They're paying for it. The Liberals here tonight are clearly on record as saying that they're opposed to any of the accountability mentioned in Bill 144.

It should be clear that approximately 83% of adult inmates in correctional institutions are found to have some degree of drug and alcohol dependency. That's worth repeating—not just to use up time here, but that may be one of the reasons—83% of adult inmates in correctional institutions are found to have some degree of drug and alcohol dependency. In fact, it's probably the root of the situations they find themselves in. For a government to desert those people and to ignore those needs is absolutely—

Mr Clark: It would be be unconscionable.

Mr O'Toole: As the member says, unconscionable. I, for one, want to stand up and say that there has to be a humanitarian kind of attitude toward this, not to enter this debate on Bill 144 assuming that people have abusive or addictive substance issues in the background. Clearly the information I have is that 83% of the inmates in correctional institutions are found to have some degree of drug use, that being clearly established as a fact. All of them here agree. I see them nodding. Well, there are very few here to nod; they're probably sleeping.

The presence of illegal substances in the institutions increases the danger—this is important too—and compromises the safety and security of staff and other inmates. It's like a plague situation. Once this happens to infiltrate an institution, it's incumbent upon the operation of that institution to take issue and challenge it. It's important to start at the very beginning, as in all things. For many people watching here, it might be an appropriate time to switch on your recorder, because I'm going to give you the definitive facts. These are the preamble statements on Bill 144.

"The name of the Board of Parole would be changed to the Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board. In circumstances prescribed by regulation"—which is important, sort of a red tape issue—"the board would be authorized to determine whether an inmate has earned remission of his or her"—I'm thinking of "her" right now—"sentence under the relevant federal or provincial legislation.

"The Lieutenant Governor in Council would be authorized to make regulations governing active participation in programs designed to promote rehabilitation"—that's probably the most important part of this whole thing, to define and determine if there's a need and then institute and promote rehabilitation and reintegration—"for the purpose of determining whether an inmate has met the requirements for earning remission of his or her sentence under the relevant federal or provincial legislation."

As I stand here, the member from Guelph-Wellington finds this humorous, but I find it hard to think of members of the opposite sex involved in any of this stuff. The real question is, how naïve am I?

"In circumstances set out in the bill, inmates, parolees, inmates on temporary absence, probationers and conditional sentence offenders could be required to produce evidence of the absence of alcohol or other substances from their bodies by submitting to tests." That's not unreasonable. The Liberals here—the members from Wellington or Essex or Brant—would know that this is a very, very reasonable expectation. If someone is serving time for invading someone's home or for some other action that has invaded someone else's rights, it's not too much to ask. But the Liberals of course are soft on crime. We know that. It's been stated here, I would say, not just by the member from Brant but more specifically by the member from St Paul's, whose absence here is noticeable. I shouldn't say that, but I will. He would, I expect, stand in his place and take some issue with the fact that the Liberals clearly are soft on crime.

"The bill would clarify that contracts may be entered into with contractors that authorize or require the contractors to provide correctional services." There's no question that we want to provide some sort of competition or accountability so that we're providing the best service at the best price. Standards are given. In fact, this introduces many standards: standards in testing, testing so there are no banned substances, whether alcohol or drugs, in our publicly funded facilities. I can't even imagine—how naïve I am—that there's a good possibility that there are banned substances in our publicly funded institutions. I'm going to have to pause for a moment because that's shocking to me.

"Related amendments deal, for example, with the relationship of contractors to the crown, powers to inspect premises operated by contractors, powers to issue directions to contractors, and powers to replace a director or superintendent of a correctional institution if a contractor does not adequately comply with directions." So the ministerial accountability is clearly here.

"The Minister of Correctional Services"—it used to be Rob Sampson, and I have every confidence that he will be returned, hopefully before Christmas—"would be authorized to appoint local monitoring boards for correctional institutions."

When I was going through Bill 144—it's not that large a bill. You can call my constituency office and get a copy, or you can get it on the Web site, www.gov.on.ca. It's there.

2240

I want to go to the section on substance testing. This seems to be substantively what much of the consternation has been about. For the record—I hope Hansard is ready—in subsection 57.9(1), "A person authorized by the minister for the purpose may demand that an inmate in a correctional institution produce evidence of the absence of alcohol or other prescribed substances from is or her body by submitting to a prescribed test to

determine the presence of alcohol or other prescribed substances in his or her body, if, (a) the demand is authorized by the director or superintendent of the correctional institution and the person authorized by the minister has"—but all of this is really to say, shouldn't a person who's incarcerated for home invasion or other kinds of infractions in society be subject to some sort of accountability? Is that too much to ask?

The Liberals clearly are on record as being opposed to all of this. It's unimaginable to me that we would allow—in fact, where you draw the line is where this bill really challenges the opposition. Any principles they may have with respect to—it sounds to me as if they think maybe just a little bit of drugs or a little bit of alcohol is OK.

It's not acceptable. It's that simple. Clearly, our current minister—I'm not sure if it's Rob Sampson; it's actually Norm Sterling, but I think it all came from the Honourable Rob Sampson, in his former life—get a life, actually—and he's still with us today. But it's challenging to me.

I'm going to read some of the subsections here. As I looked through the briefing notes that were provided for me—because I've just read Bill 144 and there are many sections which I'm not actually that familiar with, but the notes are very helpful—under the reform act an inmate is given half a day of remission for each full day served. This means inmates can have their sentence reduced by up to one third of the total. For example, an inmate serving a 90-day sentence could have his or her—there's that "her" thing again—sentence reduced by a maximum of 30 days, 15 days for each of the first two months served. So by conforming to the system, by relinquishing their self-empowerment and saying, "You know, I have committed an offence against society and I should be attempting to rehabilitate"—that's not too much to ask, in my mind—they can reduce their sentence. What we're trying to say is if there are absolute provisions for people to earn back or to be recognized for the time they've served repentantly—I don't want to say that too strongly—currently there are no means by which prison authorities can hold inmates who have earned remission in custody until the full completion of their sentence, except if they lose their earned remission through bad behaviour. There again, the bad behaviour would have to almost be defined, because in my view if someone is in prison using banned substances they certainly should not have earned back any sort of remission.

That's not being unreasonable. I think there are many persons, first-time and perhaps repeat minor offenders, who may have run into the wall and recognized that it's time they stopped this negative behaviour. Since the Ontario government cannot repeal—gee, this is the difficult part—the federal discount law, we should be making inmates actually earn any remission in their sentence, instead of handing them an automatic remission.

That's the whole point here, that automatically one third of your time is discounted. We're opposed to that.

In fact, I've heard the former Minister of Correctional Services from Mississauga Centre say it's Club Fed. It's true: the golf courses and tennis courts, it's unimaginable. Hard-working people of Ontario are paying for this. Earned remissions should be a privilege given to those who earn it, not a right. That's substantively the whole argument: it is not a right. They have offended society, they have been sentenced by a court and there should be some negative aspects to their incarceration, with all the respect that an incarcerated person deserves. I'm not sure what that is, but they can vote, they can apparently, in the federal prisons, play golf, take swimming lessons—Karla Homolka is a good example—get their degree, get a life. Can you imagine those families that have been ruined? It's a Liberal kind of policy. It comes down from Allan Rock or Anne McLellan, this intolerable acceptance of violence in society. This is just a small step of saying they shouldn't be able to use drugs and drink when they're in prison. What's wrong with this?

I can't believe that both the opposition and the third party—Mr Kormos, sitting there, knows exactly what I'm talking about. You think it's acceptable that they should be using banned substances while incarcerated? I'm weakened by this, actually, but I will recover.

Inmates not only have to behave themselves when in jail but they should also have to actively participate in programs—now, this is good—which address their criminal attitudes and behaviour. I'm all for this, the psychological warfare issue here, that they should have to participate in programs like corrective behaviour, positive attitude, all this stuff. The member for Kingston and the Islands is grinning when I say this. He knows what I mean. He lives in Kingston, and Kingston's got a lot of prisons and some of the inmates aren't inside. These should include things like work programs, education and training, doing work in institutions as well as treatment programs to address the fundamental cause of their negative behaviour to start with.

Mr Speaker, you know yourself, as everyone does here, you have to get to the root cause, the psychological disorder in their life, the lack of economic resources, the lack of training. We're saying here we provide those resources in our institutions and we would like the people to take advantage of them. I want to repeat that the fundamental thing in Bill 144 is they shouldn't be on drugs. It's very difficult to learn when you're on drugs. You've seen that commercial, "You're brain's fried on drugs." I agree with that.

Inmates should also have to behave appropriately when in the institutions, treat officers with respect. I've heard from, not specifically the former Minister of Correctional Services, Rob Sampson—

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): He's still with us.

Mr O'Toole: He's still with us—that some inmates have actually bitten, scratched and hurt, offended officers. I think they should be tested for other kinds of diseases. When you break someone's skin there could be hepatitis C and other kinds of things. I personally don't

think they should have a lot of rights in prison, other than being treated respectfully. I see the Speaker nodding. Perhaps he's nodding off.

Inmates should also have to behave appropriately when in institutions and to keep drug-free and alcohol-free and obey the rules and regulations of the prison. We expect that of ourselves in this House. Some may not abide by that but it's mostly on the other side. If they misbehave or refuse to participate in programs, they have not earned their remission and should not be let out early; they should serve their full sentence. I fully concur with that.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Clearly, I hear from the Liberals—they're barracking now—they would let them out, you know, easy parole, and let them back into society to re-offend. Making prisoners earn their remissions would make them more accountable for their actions and their impact on society. I think if we actually had some respect in the prisons and incarcerations, people would earn self-respect for themselves.

We're not talking hard time here. We're not talking anything more than conforming to the rules, as everyone in society has to, including members of our caucus. Sometimes they have to conform to the rules, under some difficulty at times.

2250

Mr Clark: Sometimes.

Mr O'Toole: Sometimes under difficulty, as Brad is saying here.

Making prisoners earn their remissions would make them more accountable for their actions and their impact on society.

If I could digress for one moment here—and I seldom do this—

Mr Clark: This time the Speaker nodded.

Mr O'Toole: He's not just nodding, he's actually smiling, which is a sign that he's laughing with or at?

Some years ago I had my home invaded when I was living in Bowmanville. We were disturbed during the night. I heard a noise downstairs. At that time we had three or four young children so I thought it was one of the children up at night. I went downstairs and as soon as I got downstairs I noticed a shadow in the back part of the house. This is a true story. I hope Hansard is getting the full recording of this. No, I'm serious. I looked out and I thought perhaps it was my brother who had come in for some reason or other, my older brother Karl—for the record, because I'll probably send him a copy of Hansard on this. It's nice to get his name in the record. No, I'm serious. Honest to God, this is the truth. They came in as the moon was shining in the window. That's sort of poetic, isn't it? I realized it was someone I didn't recognize. I'm telling you, for a moment I was frozen with fear, but being me, I soon relinquished that and sort of got—

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): You got your wife.

Mr O'Toole: I yelled out, "Peggy, help." No, no, that's not true, Brenda. Leave it alone.

I said, "I can handle this." I said, "What the heck are you doing here?" This person—and this is a fact. I would not on Hansard report this kind of information. Anyway, I said, "Look, if you don't get out of the house immediately, I'm going to call the police." But he was beside the phone, which was a problem. So I said, "I'm going to open the front door and you get the heck out of here." I said another word but on Hansard you can't say this kind of stuff. So I opened the door and I stood up on the stairs and he ran out. This is on the record. He ran out the front door. I shut the door quickly, went back, jumped on the phone and dialled 911. He was at the back window trying to get in, because 911 connected me to the police cruiser, and he was trying to get in the window. Now here's the whole story—I'm sorry to have departed but there's eight minutes left and I'll use them all.

The next week in the Bowmanville Statesman, the weekly paper, the headline was "O'Toole's Home Invaded." Do you know something? That person was an escaped convict—

Mr Clark: No.

Mr O'Toole: Yes—who tried to break into my home. When I got on 911, they were looking for him and he was trying to get back in the house. I'm telling you I felt threatened and I felt violated. There's no question. I understand on home invasions, however trivial we make these things—I felt violated and my home was violated. In fact, a couple of years later we moved. But as it turned out, this fellow was an escaped convict from John Gerretsen's riding, Kingston. He was. John was the mayor of Kingston at the time, I think. I'm not sure he had anything to do with his escape, nor would I impute those motives, but nonetheless, John wasn't up to the job then and he's not up to the job now.

The point I was trying to make is that when they're incarcerated, not only are they released early, but perhaps there's not enough rehabilitation going on in the institutions. I think making prisoners earn their remission would make them more accountable for their actions and their impact on society.

That little segue helps people understand that I'm quite genuine when I say I would not like to invade individuals' rights, but I think with individuals' rights also come individuals' responsibilities. We are all members of a collective society, and because they're incarcerated they should also have to relinquish the right to use any banned substances. There's nothing in Bill 144—and the members opposite will try to criticize it. In fact, I can account that they will probably, as on all things, vote against it, because they are definitely soft on crime. This government is trying to provide the tools for those institutions to do the right thing.

With that small, impassioned plea, I ask for your support, I ask for your understanding on Bill 144, which was introduced by the Honourable Rob Sampson on November 20. I think he should be the minister when it is proclaimed to be law in this province of Ontario. With

that, I am saving some of my time for the member from—actually, he's from not far from here. He's from Simcoe North.

The Speaker: Further debate? The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: I guess the people who want to hear from the member for Simcoe North may have to wait another hour or so before they actually have that opportunity.

In the 13 minutes I have left, I just want to touch on a number of brief points, first of all the point that the last speaker raised. Let me say that anyone who gets broken into and has a crime committed in their home feels violated. Certainly it's a very traumatic experience for the individual and for their family. It happened to me on three separate occasions in our house back in the 1980s and it's something that affected our family for a long time. I don't make light of that. But to somehow suggest that this bill has anything to do with that is absolute and total nonsense.

Let's just take a look at what the Provincial Auditor has said about the kind of criminals who are kept in our provincial institutions. One has to remember that we're talking about people who have been sentenced to two years less a day. These are not violent offenders. Let me just read to you what the Provincial Auditor stated on page 84 in his latest report, which was released just a couple of weeks ago: "The majority of inmates were admitted to Ontario's institutions for property and other offences not related to crimes of violence." So the government can fearmonger all it wants about being tough on crime; the fact of the matter is that the provincial institutions that this government is responsible for deal with individuals who are not violent, because they've been sentenced to two years less a day. The auditor goes on to say, "Our examination revealed that Ontario's success rate with the temporary absence program over the eight years remained unchanged at about 97%." In other words, 97% of all the people who have been given temporary absences do return.

Temporary absences are necessary. If you want to reintegrate somebody successfully back into the mainstream of life, you cannot put them in jail, throw away the key and hope that when they come out two years later they will somehow adhere to society's rules and regulations. That person has to be given rehabilitation, has to be given a temporary absence program to manoeuvre their way back into life, so that they will not reoffend. That surely is the goal we all want. We don't want people to reoffend. Number one, it's a lot cheaper for society if they don't reoffend, because even in our provincial institutions it costs \$95,000 to keep an inmate there on an annual basis, and number two, it's better for the individual, because hopefully when they come out and become responsible citizens they'll become taxpayers and contributors to society, and that's surely what we want for everybody. But the only way you're going to do it is to make sure that the proper programs are in place so that it will happen to the inmates.

2300

I'm again referring to the Provincial Auditor, who is an independent individual responsible to this Legislative Assembly. He's not hired by the opposition and he's not hired by the government. He's an independent officer. What does he say? He states, "Ministry staff indicated there was not one case of an offender reported to have committed a serious crime while on temporary absence." Not one case. That's the conclusion the Provincial Auditor came to in his report.

Having said that, let's also look at his overall audit conclusions on the Ministry of Correctional Services. I bring this up because I'm becoming more and more convinced that the government wants to run down this program and the programs that are run in the institutions to such a degree that the general public will simply say, "OK, we give up. Maybe you better privatize." I happen to believe it is absolutely essential that certain services remain within the public domain from a safety viewpoint, if no other viewpoint. Through its criminal laws and its other laws that have been violated by offenders, society has the right to make sure that those offenders do not reoffend and that they be incarcerated for the period of time they're sentenced to. Not only do we have the right, we have that responsibility to the offenders and also to the rest of society.

I don't think that's the kind of function you should privatize, and I will get to that in a moment, because so far your privatization efforts have been a total failure. I know the member from Simcoe North loves to talk about Camp Turnaround, but let me quote to you what the Provincial Auditor said about Project Turnaround, which has been privatized. He states that the three-year contract was an \$8.3-million contract.

"Our review of the contract and payments made to the contractor showed that an additional \$400,000 was paid to the contractor beyond the contract price for security custody services. Ministry officials informed us that the amount was for additional staffing not anticipated in the original contract." What does the auditor say? "Our examination of the contract did not reveal any provision for payments beyond the contract price."

If that's the way you want to privatize, by paying to a contractor \$400,000 more than he was entitled to, as the auditor quite clearly points out—I advise anybody who wants to have a copy of this to contact my office or the ministry office and we will send you copies of pages 82 and 83 of this report—no wonder the private contractors are lining up. They're getting paid \$400,000 more than they should be getting, according to the auditor.

It doesn't end there. He goes on to say, "The ministry was not verifying invoiced amounts against the contract. It had been overpaying the contractor"—listen to this—"by \$24,000 per year for after-care services until we brought the overpayment to its attention." Twenty-four thousand dollars per year was paid to this private contractor and it took the auditor to tell the ministry, "You shouldn't be paying this."

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Why were they paying it?

Mr Gerretsen: They were paying it for no reason whatsoever. They shouldn't have been paying it. That's the whole purpose of the thing. The auditor goes on and on. Let me tell you a couple of other things which are kind of interesting.

I happen to believe the correctional officers who work for us are decent individuals who want to do a day's work for a day's pay. These are people who are, by and large, well trained to do the kind of work they're doing. I happen to come from a community where we have seven federal institutions. I can tell you that the over 3,000 correctional officers who work in the federal system and who live in my riding of Kingston and the Islands are individuals any community can be extremely proud of. They do a good job for their community and also for the institutions they serve. The only thing I can see that could possibly upset this whole situation is if we were to privatize these sectors.

That's why I ask the minister—whoever is in charge. We don't even know which minister's in charge any more. One minister introduces the bill and he has to resign. Another minister isn't here on third reading. There's no parliamentary assistant. There are no questions to be answered by anybody. It's an awful and dreadful situation, Speaker.

I get the impression that maybe the government knows it's doing an extremely bad job. Here, for example, is another quote that's kind of interesting in the auditor's report. It says that "27% of the correctional program recommendations for meeting the needs of inmates were not met as the recommended programs were not available." The programs simply weren't available. And "60% of superintendents indicated that the existing training required of correctional officers was not adequate to meet the operational needs of their institutions."

I say to the minister, shame on you. Sixty per cent of the people who work for you weren't properly trained, according to the Provincial Auditor. You have allowed the system to almost self-destruct, and the only reason it hasn't is that we've got good people working there. Rather than spending the extra \$400,000 and giving it to private contractors when they're not entitled to the money, or the \$24,000 per year as you did with Camp Turnaround on a yearly basis, why don't you spend that money on some good training programs, so that when the officers come to work for the correctional institutions, they will be properly trained and with the proper kind of programming that they can then deliver to the inmates?

With the proper kind of rehabilitation programs we will meet the ultimate goal, the ultimate goal being the fact that these people will not reoffend. I say to the minister, to whoever is in charge, you're going exactly in the wrong direction.

I heard some comments earlier tonight from the member from Stoney Creek who tried to suggest that if you are in favour of certain public-private partnerships, therefore you've got to be in favour of every public-

private partnership. He talked about airports. I can well see a partnership for airports. That wouldn't bother me for a moment. What would bother me is if the air traffic control officers were privatized. That's what would bother me.

Mr Sampson: That's what you guys did federally.

Mr Gerretsen: That's what would bother me.

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: Here they talk again about the federal institutions. I suggest all of these members ran in the wrong election. They should have run in the last federal election we held about a month or so ago, and we all know where they'd be tonight.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: They certainly would be retired.

The point is that we, as a society, have an obligation to protect each one of our citizens. We have to make sure that those people who violate the rules of society, as set out in the Criminal Code and various other acts, are dealt with in a fair and consistent fashion. We want to make sure the people who deal with these people have the programs available to them so that these offenders will not reoffend, that they will serve their time and will get the proper kind of rehabilitation so that they will not reoffend. That's where the emphasis ought to be, rather than on this whole notion of privatizing a system that shouldn't be privatized in the first place.

I hear the members opposite laughing. They talk tough on crime, but when you get right down to it, the kinds of bills we've been dealing with in this House, such as the squeeze bill and various other things, all kind of look cosmetically as if something is happening in fighting crime, but in fact there's nothing happening at all.

Let me finish off by reading from a debate that was held just recently on private prisons. It states that there is "no convincing evidence to date that privately run prisons are any cheaper than public ones." As a matter of fact, if you let this government privatize our system, it's going to cost us more money, as the auditor has already found out.

The state should be ultimately responsible for administering the penal system in any society. So I say to you, Minister, because you probably will be a minister again, take this bill back and bring back a reasonable bill dealing with rehabilitation to make sure that offenders do not reoffend.

2310

Mr Kormos: It's 11:10 on Monday night.

Mr Sampson: Can you tell the time now?

Mr Kormos: I'm working on it.

I want to tell you, yesterday I was at the Apostolic Lighthouse Pentecostal Church, over on Ontario Road in Welland; Pastor Grant and that community. I first joined with those people when they were using the old movie theatre downtown as their church hall. What they have done—it's a very small congregation—is bought the old Polish hall on Ontario Road and converted it into their sanctuary. It's a very small congregation, still growing. Pastor Grant is a bright, young preacher who is clearly

acquiring a following. I was most impressed with the kids putting on their Christmas pageant, Speaker. It was a most impressive midday event. I simply wanted to let you know that was one of the things we did on Sunday down there. I'm grateful to the Apostolic Lighthouse Pentecostal Church, to Pastor Grant, to that congregation, and I wish them the very best.

But I was driving up here this morning on the QEW and I'm being made aware of a press conference that apparently the new Minister of Correctional Services is holding. I'm doing the best I can, but there's simply no way I'm going to get here by 10:30.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): You weren't speeding at all.

Mr Kormos: No, I had the little Chevy S-10, high-mileage as it is. Thank goodness for the folks in the back room at David Chev-Olds, because those folks, the mechanics there—unionized mechanics—keep that old truck running, travelling back and forth on the QEW.

But I was keeping abreast of what had happened in the minister of corrections' press conference. I was shocked and appalled, and I questioned Ms Stiles, one of our researchers, questioned her repeatedly, "Are you sure that that's how it went down this morning?" She assured me the minister of corrections displayed no noblesse oblige whatsoever, made no reference to his predecessor's work on the bill that he, the new minister of corrections, was introducing. I asked Ms Stiles several times if she was certain. I said, "Surely he acknowledged the work Mr Sampson put into the legislation." I asked Ms Stiles, "Are you certain?" The Minister of Correctional Services has been a member here much longer than I have. He's one of the more senior members of this Parliament. I thought, "How could a person with that much experience here be so crass as to not even salute his predecessor, Mr Sampson, and acknowledge the work that Mr Sampson had put into the bill, the Victim Empowerment Act?"

I was shocked when I was assured that, no, the Minister of Correctional Services did not see fit to acknowledge the work that Mr Sampson clearly had put into that bill that the new Minister of Correctional Services announced in his press conference this morning and then presented for first reading. So I was anxious for a ministerial statement this afternoon. I was reflecting on what I was going to say, having been briefed by our caucus staff person. I was going to admonish—I was going to ask the minister of corrections, would it have killed him to have said, "Thank you very much, Mr Sampson, for the work you've done"? Would it have been that painful to have shown Mr Sampson the courtesy of thanking him for the work that clearly he had done in preparing the Victim Empowerment Act, I'm sure very much the same level of work that the former Minister of Correctional Services put into the preparation of Bill 144?

I wanted to chastise the Minister of Correctional Services, if I had had that chance during responses to ministerial statements. I didn't have a chance, because of course he didn't make a ministerial statement, so I'm

doing it now. I thought that was very rude of the Minister of Correctional Services to not have thanked Mr Sampson for his work on this Victim Empowerment Act and his work on Bill 144.

But then I realized that in very short order—trust me—the new Minister of Correctional Services will be blaming it all on Mr Sampson. I watched the Minister of Correctional Services outside the chamber after the bill had been presented for first reading. It didn't take long to read it, because the Victim Empowerment Act, as it was billed—well, the bill doesn't live up to the billing. It didn't take long for the press to understand that there are no victims' rights contained in the Victim Empowerment Act introduced for first reading earlier today. There are no rights contained in it.

It doesn't entrench the right of a victim to appear at, never mind participate in, the parole hearing of the criminal who imposed the crime. It doesn't entrench any right for that victim to attend or participate in the parole hearing of that criminal. In fact, all it does is say that the government has the power to, by regulation, determine which victims, if any, will be able to attend parole hearings of the criminal who victimized them. The government will also, by regulation—which means behind closed doors, in secret, without debate, without public consultation—decide the extent to which that victim, if she or he is allowed to be at that parole hearing, can be involved in the parole process.

It was one of the most dramatic failures of this government to live up to its billing—self-billed, self-proclaimed—as champions of victims when it became so quickly apparent that there were no rights contained in this bill once again. This government's now got a pretty hefty legacy of failed commitments to victims of crime. This government has a pretty hefty legacy of a failed agenda when it comes to making communities safer.

Once again, we've got a bill presented to us today which very much follows on the heels of Bill 144. Bill 144 is going to be notable, obviously, as the bill for which a good friend of Mr Sampson's, the member for Northumberland—

Mr Sampson: Still a friend.

Mr Kormos: Yes, the member for Northumberland, a good friend of Mr Sampson's, a person to whom Mr Sampson I suspect feels many obligations, a sense of indebtedness perhaps. Perhaps Mr Sampson possesses that primitive sense of retribution with respect to Mr Galt. I don't know. But Bill 144 is going to be remembered most for that unpleasant incident—was it just a week ago?—which has resulted now in a police investigation and in two resignations, one by a parliamentary assistant and one by a minister.

2320

Although Bill 144 was played up as more of the Tories getting tough on crime and more of the Tory agenda of protecting victims of crime and ensuring that corrections worked—the billing was huge, big neon letters—the pathetic reality of Bill 144 is that it's just another little building block on the way to complete privatization of

our correctional system in Ontario. Although from time to time I've liked the previous minister, as a person I suppose, it remains clear that just as his thumbprint is all over Bill 144, it is similarly all over the Victim Empowerment Act today, to which the present Minister of Correctional Services declined to acknowledge Mr Sampson's contribution.

These are frankly crap bills. They're phony-baloney bills. They're bills that have fancy, attractive titles but at the same time are very deceitful. They're bills that fail to live up to any promise. In fact, they not only don't live up to the promise, but they break the commitment, they break the promise. Promise made, promise broken.

Here we are in the year 2000 with fewer police per capita than we had in 1994 when we were still recovering from that deep recession when revenues in this province plummeted through the basement. Here we are in the year 2000, when the government says it cares about safer communities, and we've got fewer police officers per capita today than we did six years ago. I don't find that level of staffing, when it comes to police officers, by a government that is enjoying revenues that haven't been seen in a long time in Ontario—I don't find that lack of resourcing and lack of staffing of our police services boards across this province to be indicative of any real commitment to safer communities. I find it a complete failure, along with this government's complete failure in the area of victims' rights.

Remember what Judge Day said about your Victims' Bill of Rights? Judge Day made it clear that your Victims' Bill of Rights—and opposition members were telling you this on a regular basis throughout the debate around that so-called Victims' Bill of Rights. The courts finally told you that your Victims' Bill of Rights contains no rights for victims, that there are no rights in this province for victims of crime.

All the fanfare around the victims' rights office and all the bills like Bill 144 or the Victim Empowerment Act—what a sad title for that bill. Look, two weeks ago the Attorney General put on his Eliot Ness double-breasted suit and fedora. He's out there, he's going to take on, he's going to be like the G-men on TV. The Attorney General is going to be like Eliot Ness. He's going to be busting up the Mob and seizing their assets.

At the same time, we saw a bill come forward that has dubious sustainability in terms of its exposure to serious charter arguments and also a bill that would require levels of resources for crown attorneys, courts, investigators and police that this government simply isn't prepared to provide. The fact is that this government has made so little contribution to the existing federally permitted procedures to seize proceeds of crime that it becomes pretty obvious it has no interest in really providing the resources to make the bill work, if indeed the bill is workable.

But that wasn't the end of it. Two weeks ago the Attorney General was Eliot Ness. Last week, in the silliest press conference of all—it really was silly; it was

a silly press conference—the Attorney General introduced a law that had already been passed in 1994.

Does this guy not read the Revised Statutes of Ontario? I've read his CV, I've read somewhere that he's a lawyer. He was in the Supreme Court of Canada where he, as the Attorney General, distinguished himself. You'll recall the press reports about that. The Attorney General of Ontario distinguished himself in the Supreme Court of Canada. He really distinguished himself.

Well he did, Mr DeFaria. You're smiling, and you as a lawyer understand exactly what I'm saying. He embarrassed himself in the Supreme Court of Canada. Yes, hide your face in shame. I agree.

Mr DeFaria, it's nice to see you are prepared to stand up and be counted when you've got to call it the way it is. The Attorney General of Ontario bungled his appearance in the Supreme Court of Canada. He did. He blew it, big time. He "distinguished" himself.

Two weeks ago: Eliot Ness. Last week the Attorney General, in part of this law-and-order agenda, announced he was going to introduce a law that was passed six years ago, the proceeds of crime bill that was passed in 1994. It was Cam Jackson's private member's bill that was adopted by the government of the day, which made it illegal for a criminal to profit from the sale of books or movie rights, all those sorts of things, relating their crimes and further exploiting their crimes.

But last week the Attorney General was announcing and tabling for first reading legislation that was passed six years ago. I don't understand that. I find that very peculiar. It's strange. It's a little wacko. It betrays somebody who hasn't spent a lot of time doing some basic legal research. I appreciate that the Attorney General wasn't a member of this Legislature in 1994. But good grief, one of his own caucus mates was the author of the private member's bill that became law. Doesn't the Attorney General talk to his caucus mates?

I'm saying to the backbenchers here, clearly you engage in socialization with ; we've seen some of that this evening.

Interjection: You'll get me in trouble.

Mr Kormos: Well, comradeship with each other.

Interjection: That's better.

Mr Kormos: Surely you spend that kind of quality time with your Attorney General. I presume you have quality time with your Attorney General where you sit around and the Attorney General says, "I was thinking of doing this. What do you guys think?" Maybe when you are sitting down with him—just the guys and gals, jackets off, shirt sleeves rolled up and somebody's been mixing the Freshie—the Attorney General says, "Look, I've got this idea. I think I'm going to pass a law that'll make it illegal for criminals to profit from their crimes."

Then somebody like Cam Jackson could have said, "Mr Attorney General, we've already got that law. I had a private member's bill in 1994 that the government of the day passed." Then the Premier—why do I keep calling the Attorney General the Premier? Does the Attorney General have ambitions? I think it's possible.

He looks like somebody on the campaign trail to me, and I'm not talking about just working his riding. I think somebody over there has their vision set on something a little further than just tomorrow or New Year's Eve. I suspect—how could I know with certainty? Of course I couldn't.

If you had that kind of quality time with your Attorney General you could have told him, "Attorney General, don't embarrass yourself by announcing you are going to introduce a bill that is already law." Then he wouldn't have looked silly as he looked last week, and the press wouldn't have been all over him like a cheap suit with questions that left him stunned and eager. You know, you've got the little helpers, the ones who say, "The interview is over," the ones who grab you by the arm and you're out of that scrum. That little minion last week was doing an awful lot of tugging. "Attorney General, this interview is over, trust me. Honest, it's over. Guys, shut the cameras off. Interview's over."

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The real issue last week was that pressure was being put on the Attorney General and the Premier about the prospect of some Hollywood-type film being made with Hollywood-type actors here in Toronto about two of the most despicable criminals this province has ever suffered—Bernardo and Homolka. Hampton and the New Democrats are saying, "Look, please, Premier, Attorney General, stop this thing. Tell us you're not going to let any film-maker use any government property. Just tell these film-makers they're not going to have access to province of Ontario government buildings to make this film." After a few days in question period, it was suggested, "Oh, Mr Hampton, we've done that."

Then Hampton said, "Will you then please let us, on unanimous consent, amend the budget, still before the House, so that we can ensure that no money from the Ontario Film Development Corp, taxpayers' money, goes to finance or support the financing of this kind of film?" All of a sudden the Attorney General and the Premier didn't want to do that. They left the distinct impression, the Premier and the Attorney General, that if Ontario taxpayers subsidize some Hollywood movie to make millions of bucks for producers and film companies starring Hollywood kind of actors, that was OK with the Premier of Ontario and the Attorney General.

The Attorney General introduces a bill that's already law, because the law is already clear in Ontario that criminals can't profit from their crime. But then the Attorney General refuses to stand up and be counted and tell those film-makers who want to make a film about Bernardo and Homolka that if they want to do it, they'd better do it somewhere other than Ontario, that they're not welcome in Ontario because Ontarians and the government of this province aren't going to tolerate that sort of pornographic production.

They could have said that, but they didn't. So they've got to make a little distraction, a little diversionary tactic David Copperfield with legerdemain. Get people looking up there while you're doing something over here.

As I say, two weeks ago it was Eliot Ness taking on organized crime. Last week it was the Attorney General introducing a bill that had already been passed as law six years ago. That was a tough one. Very clever, Attorney General; nice trick. Slick, Jack. That was really slick. "I'm going to introduce a bill. It was law already? What the heck; I'll introduce it anyway. Come on, guys, give me the press conference, because I might be running for leader of the party."

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: It's either going to be—the Attorney General, like most of his colleagues, risked his fortunes with the Alliance in the last federal election. It didn't work out well, did it? Yikes. Ouch.

This week we have the Victim Empowerment Act, a little complementary legislation to Bill 144. In this one we have good grooming for prisoners. The Minister of Correctional Services has no idea what that's going to mean. We want better-groomed prisoners; we want prisoners who, I don't know, use talcum after they shower. I don't know what he has in mind. He doesn't know what he's got in mind. Better-groomed prisoners, for Pete's sake.

Interjection: The Charlie Manson bill.

Mr Kormos: Yes. The Tories here operate on the presumption that if Charlie Manson had but a decent shave and haircut, his character would have been entirely different. Just fix the guy up a little bit, get some gel into the hair, and he's not going to be a mass murderer. That's nuts. That's naïve. It's silly. That was the level of intellect in the good grooming bill introduced earlier today. It's silliness, and quite frankly, it's dishonest.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Speaker, listen carefully, because the people of Ontario are tired of being lied to. The people of Ontario are tired of deceit. They are.

The Speaker: I may have missed that, but I'm sure if the member did say something, he would withdraw it.

Mr Kormos: Speaker, I said the people of Ontario are tired of being lied to, because nobody likes being lied to, do we, Speaker? Nobody likes being lied to.

The Speaker: Just so I'm clear—I missed the beginning part of it. If you're referring to the government saying that, then you're going to have to withdraw that, I'm afraid.

Mr Kormos: I didn't speak the government's name in the context of that observation, but I'll withdraw.

But I've got to tell you, Speaker, nobody likes being lied around the block. Down where I come from, in Welland and Thorold and Pelham and south St Catharines, I've got folks who make it quite clear to me that the one thing that really gets them most is when they're lied to. That just drives them right up the wall. They expect, in this kind of community, some levels of civility that don't include being lied to, because nobody likes liars. We should deplore dishonesty. We should deplore deceit. We should deplore legislation that's hailed and billed as being good, tough law-and-order

legislation but ends up pulling the rug out from underneath victims.

We should deplore a government that had its pathetic performance in the Victims' Bill of Rights exposed by the courts of this province. Mr DeFaria, you read that judgment, didn't you, the judgment of Judge Day? You read it. You know what it says. As a lawyer, Mr DeFaria, you know what it says. You know what Judge Day said about the Victims' Bill of Rights, and you care. You deal with judges and you deal with victims. From time to time, you deal with offenders. But you know what Judge Day said about the Ontario Victims' Bill of Rights. Judge Day said that there are no rights.

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Mr Baird, what did Mr Harris promise in response to that judgment? Mr Harris promised that that's OK, he'd fix the Victims' Bill of Rights. Is that not right, Mr Baird, that he'd fix the Victims' Bill of Rights? Mr Baird, come back.

The Premier of Ontario said that he would fix the Victims' Bill of Rights. Mr DeFaria, you might not have been in the room a couple of minutes ago. That's OK, because you're a busy person. You've got things to do. You've got phone calls to make. But I was talking to some of your caucus colleagues—Mr Baird, move over. I'm talking to Mr DeFaria.

I was talking to some of your caucus colleagues about how you've got to have quality time with your cabinet ministers. I was explaining—were you here when I was explaining, Mr DeFaria—how some of you had had a chance to sit down with the Attorney General, jackets off, sleeves rolled up, and he had said, "Look, I've got this idea to write a bill that would prevent criminals from profiting from their crimes." You, Mr DeFaria, would have told him, "Don't be stupid, Attorney General. We already have that legislation." You're a lawyer. You knew we had that on the books. We've had it since 1994. You would have said, "Attorney General, don't be stupid. What's the matter with you? Read the books."

Mr DeFaria could have sat the Attorney General down, taken him to the RSOs, the statutes of Ontario, 1994, and said, "Look, Mr Attorney General"—don't you have a little bit of an ethical obligation to the Attorney General as a lawyer, Mr DeFaria, to protect him from embarrassing himself? You could have helped the Attorney General. You could have sat him down for just a little bit of quality time. You could have sat him down and said, "Look, if you go in front of a press conference and talk about this legislation, they're going to say, 'Wasn't that bill already passed?'" Right, Mr DeFaria? Think about it, Speaker; think about it.

Interjection: You can't mention a member's name.

Mr Kormos: I figured I was ready to get point-of-ordered on, "You can't talk to members directly; you've got to direct comments through the Speaker." That was a good one. Boy, do you think the brain trust over here will come up with more really tough ones before the night's over? Do you think they've all got their little thinking caps on? They're going to throw some real zingers out.

"Point of order, Speaker: Make Kormos address the Speaker." For Pete's sake. Is that the best you guys could do? Jeez.

You've heard some reference to the report of the Provincial Auditor. This crew over here have been condemned more thoroughly than any of the three governments in my short time here that I've been through. This government has been condemned more thoroughly. This government has been exposed as being incapable of running the store. Look at it: indictment after indictment. You've read the report, Mr DeFaria, haven't you? You bet your boots you have. Did anybody ask your advice? Did they ask? Had they, I'm sure you would have been helpful. You would have been prepared to sit down and say—Mr DeFaria, don't go. You can come and sit over here, if you'd like.

You know what the auditor said about this government's pathetic management, the creation of that Snobelenesque crisis in corrections? What was it, \$24,000 a year, \$2,000 a month? Talk about crime and the proceeds of crime. Camp Turnaround was picking the taxpayers' pocket, with you as co-conspirators, to the tune of 24 grand a year. You kept writing the cheques. It wasn't money they earned; it was theft from the taxpayers, and you guys are driving the getaway car.

Yes, \$400,000 paid to the contractor beyond the contract price for security custody services, just shy of half a million bucks that you pay to your buddy private sector partners. Just because they're friends? Are you just happy to see them and you cut the cheque? Is it that easy? Is that what it amounts to, that you simply submit the invoices to this government? Whether it's almost half a million dollars over a contract price agreed upon, you just cut the cheque: "Here's 400 grand, guys." Or, in the case of Camp Turnaround—and we know about Camp Turnaround—two grand a month overpayment, month after month after month after month. This wasn't one incident of inadvertence. This was month after month after month. The cook-chill was millions and millions of dollars over estimated cost, Mr Sampson, and it still doesn't have the capacity to feed the inmates contained in what are soon to be private institutions. You see, what Bill 144 is all about is the privatization of our prisons. Mr Sampson was prepared to hand them over. He didn't even make them accept any of the risks. He made sure that the taxpayer of Ontario stayed on the hook for the construction of the mega-jails in Penetang, in Lindsay and down in Milton. The taxpayer pays, the private sector profits. A pretty nice relationship—pretty cosy, Mr Sampson.

And you purport to worry about the victims of this province, when you victimize taxpayers with your mismanagement of corrections in the province of Ontario, when you and your government have been parties to a rip-off of taxpayers that drew the thorough ire of the Provincial Auditor, that left the auditor just shaking his head.

Mr Sampson: It's quarter to 12.

Mr Kormos: Mr Sampson mentions that it's 11:47. I can't, for the life of me, understand why opposition members participate in government motions to have these pre-Christmas-break midnight sessions. The government is interested in using the late-hour sittings for leveraging all sorts of things out of opposition members that opposition members, for better or worse, wouldn't be prepared to deal away in any way, shape or form. There is no press gallery here scrutinizing what's going on, which I suppose sometimes is better for all concerned. The press isn't here and people aren't watching. People who do click in think it's a re-run, which is why I am pleased to remind them it's 11:50 on Monday, December 18, and this is live. The bill has been time-allocated.

You didn't send this bill out to committee because you're afraid of what committee exposure would have done in terms of exposing your agenda, your plans for our prisons and your complete disregard for community safety, your complete disregard, expressed over and over again, for victims. Victims were mocked today by the Minister of Correctional Services. People who look for government to provide it with some structure to, yes, help make safer communities are offended at the proposition that good grooming is going to replace rehabilitation and programs in our provincial correctional institutions.

We know that once the private sector grabs hold of these institutions, once the deal's finished, once all the signatures are on the dotted line, where there are huge profits to be made by the private sector, almost inevitably American, corporate, for-profit operators, who not only will be reaping the great profits from public dollars but will be draining them back into the United States—they won't even stay in the province of Ontario. You, former Minister of Correctional Services, have paved the way for a complete seizure of corrections by non-Canadian operators. You know—and if you don't, you ought to know; it should have been available to you in briefings—that once the American private for-profit sector, like the Wackenhuts, like the Corrections Corps of America, get their hands on our correctional services, unlike Great Britain, unlike Australia, unlike New Zealand, the prospect of them ever being returned to the public sector becomes very marginalized. These guys are trading them away so their corporate buddies can make huge profits.

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This government and its present and former Ministers of Correctional Services have no interest in or familiarity with what is going on in our correctional system, and have had as their primary goal the gutting of it so they create crisis after crisis, the very sorts of crises exposed most recently by the auditor, the very sorts of crises that correctional officers, if only you would have sat down and talked with them, would have been prepared to talk to you about any place in Ontario any time, you name the location. But no, this government and its Ministers of Correctional Services are more interested in being wined and dined by the Wackenhuts and the Corrections Corps of America and letting those operators write policy for the Ministry of Correctional Services and the government

of Ontario. The stakes are high. There are huge profits to be made. And you guys, this government, the Mike Harris Tories, are handing it over. They're handing it over, lock, stock and barrel. The people who are being victimized are the taxpayers of this province and the people who look to their government to create some semblance of security and protection from crime in their communities. We will not be supporting this bill.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I would like to thank the members from Stoney Creek and Durham for their comments, as well as all the opposition members, particularly the member from Niagara. He's always so colourful to listen to.

On third reading of Bill 144, the Corrections Accountability Act: since 1995 our government has made important changes to the province's justice system. It's clear where we stand. We have put more police officers on the streets, increased support for victims and set tough new standards for the parole board. We're investing \$450 million to build and improve correctional facilities with state-of-the-art security measures and reinforced materials to make them among the strongest and safest in the world.

Our corrections ministry is overseeing some long overdue reforms that are necessary to protect the public from crime and to introduce more efficiency into our system. Year after year, and we've heard this over and over tonight, auditor's reports show that we need to be more efficient. I'd like to point out that the minister has taken a leadership role in spearheading a reform of our system that will help to lower the average reoffending rate and help ensure that the tax dollars that we collect here in Ontario are spent more efficiently and at a savings to the hard-working citizens of the province.

Within our publicly run young offender facilities, we have an average reoffending rate of 60% and our adult facilities have rates of 70% to 80%. At the same time, these are the most expensive correctional facilities to operate in all of Canada. This means that when a youth goes into a correctional facility, they have a 60% chance of recommitting a crime. The same can be said of adults, who have a much higher reoffending rate. This is completely unacceptable.

We believe one way of improving the quality of services is by introducing competition to the correctional system. We are seeing success in our first public-private partnership model, Project Turnaround. Project Turnaround is not Camp Turnaround, and it's not in Barrie; it's in Hillsdale and it's called Project Turnaround. I listened to some comments by the opposition. I think they've even got that mixed up with the Brookside unit. The contract the government has with Encourage Youth Corp of Canada, the operator, outlines performance standards based on the reoffending rates.

The strict discipline program for young offenders has been running for over two years with promising results with some of the most difficult young offenders in Ontario. As much as I can understand, there has been

only one problem, only one time, and that was the very first day it was open. That's the only time, and I would invite anyone to go up and ask the management to see if they can tour that facility and see how much is really wrong with Project Turnaround. We've heard the fear-mongering and the scare tactics, the same nonsense that the member for Brant has vomited out for over a year now. It's almost pathetic, what's really happening here.

We've talked about competition and choice in all sorts of projects that governments run. The province of Ontario is building two 1,200-unit facilities in this province, one in Lindsay and one in Penetang, through a five-year pilot project. There's nothing wrong with that. I don't see any problem with operating one facility by the private sector and one by the public sector. They both report to the Ministry of Correctional Services, and at the end of five years, let's compare how these two operators perform. I see nothing wrong with that and I think the people of Ontario expect nothing less than that.

We heard it earlier from the member from Kingston. He talked about how these people who are in provincially run facilities are only in there for two years less a day and are non-violent offenders. That's not what the critic for the opposition has been saying for over a year. He's been fearmongering and running scare tactics throughout the province saying that these are the most violent people on the face of the earth. Unfortunately what he wasn't seeing was he wasn't comparing it to the federal correctional facilities that put cop-killers in minimum-security facilities right across our country.

Over and over we've pointed out examples to you and you've never yet shown any leadership at all in trying to ask the federal correctional system to at least look into it. You've done nothing. You've fearmongered and used scare tactics on everyone in Ontario and you've failed at it. I'm sorry, but you've failed at it.

It's been a pleasure to take a few minutes tonight to make a few comments on Bill 144.

The Speaker: Mr Baird has moved third reading of Bill 144, An Act to establish accountability in correctional services, to make offenders demonstrate that they are drug-free, to set rules for offenders to earn their release, to give the Board of Parole a say in earned release decisions, and to change the name of the Board of Parole.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I would like to request that the vote on Bill 144 be deferred until tomorrow at Deferred Votes." It is therefore so ordered.

It now being 12 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1159.

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First Session, 37th Parliament

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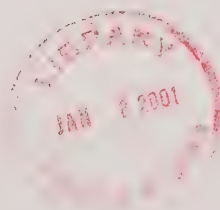
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Mardi 19 décembre 2000



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 décembre 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): Today I'm addressing the subject of failure. I'm talking about the complete failure of this government to meet the needs of its citizens.

There have been many signposts on the road. We on this side of the House have worked to raise the alarm about the dangers of the Harris government agenda. They believe over there that they are not government; that they are only there to fix government. We see how well things have been "fixed." It took seven deaths in Walkerton for people to see that clearly. Health care cuts and forced hospital closures have created a crisis in health care: not enough beds, equipment, nurses or technicians anywhere. The doctor shortage in rural and northern Ontario has spiralled out of control.

This government has failed to invest wisely, failed to get their priorities straight. We're looking at a school system in chaos. We knew Bill 160 would create a crisis. In fact, it was their goal. It resulted in mass school closures. We knew that centralized power in the Ministry of Education would poison the atmosphere in our classrooms. It has come to pass. Yet the minister still refuses to consider the Liberal peace plan from Dalton McGuinty.

Downloading and privatization have created havoc for Ontarians in the environment, on our highways, in our ambulances, in meat inspection. We knew that would result in illegal abattoirs. We were not fearmongering. We were pointing out real risks. Now we see that Ontarians are at risk in dozens of ways because of the failures of this Mike Harris government.

OPP WALL OF HONOUR

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Last Thursday, December 14, the Ontario Provincial Police Association hosted a rededication ceremony of their newly designed Wall of Honour built in memory of their fallen officers. The ceremony was held at the OPP general headquarters in Orillia. OPP Commissioner Harold H.

Graham dedicated the first honour roll on December 4, 1978, at the OPP headquarters in Toronto. At that time the honour roll contained 46 names. On September 16, 1995, the honour roll was moved to the foyer of the new general headquarters in Orillia. On that day, there were 69 officers named on the wall. Today, tragically, there are 89 officers named.

I was honoured to be represented at the dedication ceremony, along with OPP Commissioner Gwen Boniface, Solicitor General David Tsubouchi and OPPA president Brian Adkin. Also in attendance were the OPP Chorus, the Commissioner's Own Pipes and Drums and the OPPA/Barrie Youth Band.

Along with 12 others, the name of Sergeant Margaret Eve of the Chatham-Kent OPP was added to the honour roll. Sergeant Eve, as you all know, was tragically killed in a police cruiser accident during the spring session and is the most recent officer named on the wall.

I'd like to close by repeating what OPP Commissioner Harold Graham said on December 4, 1978, at the time of the original dedication, as he refers to the police: "Dedicated to preserving memories of our members who lost their lives in the pursuit of peace and tranquility for the citizens of this province."

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): A few days ago, Mr Wettlaufer, the Kitchener Centre member, raised what he thought was a major law-and-order issue. He found that "younger members of our society, particularly those that wear the skateboard pants, are ... disregarding the rules about the appropriate way to cross roadways.... They walk across the road, eyeing down motorists.... They walk across with a swagger." The Solicitor General said he has plans to fight this with both the Highway Traffic Act and the Criminal Code.

I wanted to point out another problem to the Solicitor General. There are, in many areas, gangs of youth on residential roads. They are armed with wooden sticks, they're propelling hard rubber missiles and they wear gang garb: blue Maple Leaf shirts. Catching them is going to be very difficult because, once again, they're very cunning. As soon as the police car rounds the corner, they have a code: they yell "car" and they scatter.

Just as Mr Wettlaufer is tracking down these young people who walk with a swagger, wearing skateboard pants, the Solicitor General may want to turn his atten-

tion, as he fights for law and order, to another serious issue: these young people on the roads, with wooden sticks, playing with these hard rubber objects.

Once again the government is using our police organizations to fight law-and-order issues. I think in some respects they would be better off fighting the real criminals, rather than going after young people who walk with a swagger and wear skateboard pants.

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got a message from the Canadian Federation of Students, and it's addressed to Minister Cunningham.

"I wish to communicate my concerns to you regarding private universities. Like many of my colleagues, I do not believe that the move toward private universities has anything to do with providing students with 'innovative and flexible choices,'" as you say. "Rather, it is our belief that the establishment of private universities will lead to a two-tiered system of post-secondary education.

"Private universities will be exclusive places of privilege, open only to those who can afford to pay the high tuition fees they charge. What's worse is that private universities may draw on public funds in the form of tax incentives, financial assistance for students, and research grants for faculty. In other jurisdictions, private universities have drawn on public resources without enhancing either the quality or accessibility of a university education. By allowing tuition fees to skyrocket beyond the reach of working people many will lose the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education.

"Education should not be a for-profit enterprise—a business—accountable only to shareholders. Education is a right. Thus, I call on the Ontario government to stop Bill 132 and to restore funding to democratically controlled publicly funded universities. If your government is truly committed to creating choice then it should be reinvesting in the existing, public post-secondary education system, ending deregulation of tuition fees, freezing and reducing tuition fees and implementing a system of needs-based grants. Only through these measures will you ensure that every willing and qualified student has a place at a high-quality public university."

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):

'Twas the week before Christmas,
and all through the House,
Not a critic was stirring, with nothing to grouse;
The stockings were hung by the Legislature with care,
In hopes federal tax cuts soon would be there.

The Tories were nestled all snug in their seats,
Too much Christmas shopping
had worn out their feet;
The malls were all full, the retailers were happy,
As all took advantage of an economy snappy.

But on the other side of that august chamber,
The Grits didn't share in the holiday cheer,
Away to the PM they flew like a flash,
Dalton tore into the Tories, and attempted to bash.

But the Prime Minister said, with a laugh and a grin,
"Tax cuts aren't bad, they're most certainly in.
Although I'd never admit, they're old Micky's idea,"
And the voters all say, "That's a good place to be-a."

Now Shawinigan Jean's a right crafty old elf,
And Tories laugh when they see him,
in spite of himself.
But with a wink of his eye and twist of head,
He assured dear old Dalton he had nothing to dread.

"It's the taxpayers' money," the PM intoned,
"You'd better get used to it," he continued to drone.
Dalton spoke not a word, but he turned with a jerk,
"I'll spend my tax cuts on my family,"
he said with a smirk.

For the season in Ontario was filled with much joy,
Such a wonderful time for each girl and boy.
Even Dalton McGuinty got the holiday right,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night."

1340

PRIVATE CLINICS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): The management and delivery of publicly funded rehabilitation services in Ontario is increasingly being turned over to large for-profit corporations.

My research suggests that one company, LifeMark, recently acquired at least five clinics, in Hamilton, Scarborough and Downsview. That brings their total acquisitions in Ontario to 22 publicly funded clinics. I understand that LifeMark would like to have 50 clinics in Ontario before the end of another year.

Another company, Accelerate, which is part of a large American-based health management company, already has 10 clinics in Ontario, at least five of which are physiotherapy clinics. Accelerate is projecting a doubling of their profits next year and attributes part of their expected growth to their expansion in Ontario.

We should all be aware that the public funds that are made available for rehabilitation are extremely limited. So the fact that more of this limited public funding is going to the profit margins of large corporations is an area of concern.

But I am also concerned about the redirection of rehabilitation services by companies interested in financial bottom lines. LifeMark and Accelerate appear to be targeting their services to nursing homes, where they receive twice the fee from OHIP that they can get for treating someone in a community clinic. Without doubt, nursing homes that have to provide physiotherapy out of their over-stretched budgets will welcome getting this

service for their residents. The problem is that the budget for these public physiotherapy clinics is capped at \$40 million, so any service offered to the nursing homes comes at the expense of even longer waiting lists for physiotherapy.

The bottom line is that waiting lists for physiotherapy are getting longer and longer, and more and more people are having to pay for treatment out of their own pockets.

There must be some limits placed on the expansion of these corporations in Ontario. The government should make any sale of further licences for publicly funded clinics contingent on maintaining community access to those clinics.

FANSHAWE COLLEGE

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I rise today to give our instructors and students at Simcoe's Fanshawe College a pat on the back.

Fanshawe College, Simcoe campus, may be small, with about 300 students, but it recently earned itself top marks with respect to provincial statistics. This campus, which serves Norfolk county, ranks tops among the four Fanshawe locations in a study conducted by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The study asked students to rank the quality of instruction, value of the skills they learned, how prepared they were for jobs and whether they would recommend the campus to others.

Overall, 81% of Fanshawe's 1999 graduates were satisfied or very satisfied. This is up 12% from Ontario's average. Another key statistic: 89% of employers of Fanshawe graduates were satisfied or very satisfied, compared to the provincial average of 80%. Fortunately, 92% of the 1999 graduates from Fanshawe were employed six months after graduation. I think this is outstanding.

Today, I'd like the rest of the Legislature to know about this top-notch educational facility. As a former student, a former instructor and a former member of the advisory committee for Fanshawe, I join the friends of Fanshawe and others in my riding in offering hearty congratulations to this outstanding institution.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Two words which have virtually disappeared from the vocabulary of the Harris government are "energy conservation." With home heating oil, natural gas, diesel fuel and gasoline prices skyrocketing, the Conservative government of Ontario has all but abandoned any initiatives designed to bring down the demand for energy.

Programs established in the late 1980s and early 1990s to curb the rising demand for fuel, to power everything from electric power plants to vehicles to household appliances, have been abandoned to satisfy the red tape eliminators and the budget slashers, who prefer a laissez-faire regulatory regime and who have an unquenchable appetite for the tax cuts, even at the expense of the

elimination of valuable and effective energy conservation programs.

California, where supply is insufficient and costs are rising dramatically for electric power, is an example of deregulation at its very worst, yet Ontario is bound and determined to follow this ill-advised path.

Whether it's the conservation of water, prime agricultural land or energy, the Harris government has relinquished its responsibility to play a key role.

It's time to embark upon new and innovative energy conservation initiatives to reduce the demand which is driving costs to the consumer sky high and allowing essential and declining resources to deplete at an alarming rate.

In transportation, at home, at businesses and industrial operations, and in the production of electric power, energy conservation is the answer to our energy crisis. Bold, thoughtful leadership by our provincial government is needed but unfortunately is sadly lacking.

EQUESTRIAN RIDING SAFETY

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): How many of us know children who love horses, who want a pony for Christmas, who want riding lessons for their birthday? An ever-increasing number of Ontarians are choosing to go horseback riding for recreational purposes, but many of these weekend riders are inexperienced and have no idea what to expect. Many of the riders are children who do not have the strength to control a large and unpredictable animal. Many of these children have been hurt, sometimes killed, in accidents which could have been prevented.

A riding helmet, boots, and breakaway stirrups are simple pieces of equipment which need to be worn every time, every ride. If 10-year-old Elizabeth Hader had been provided with safety gear, she might be alive today. It is nothing less than a tragedy that a little girl who loved horses was involved in such a senseless accident.

For this reason, I would like to take this opportunity to inform the House about an important piece of legislation which will be debated this week. On Thursday morning, my private member's bill is scheduled for second reading. Bill 156, An Act to increase the safety of equestrian riders, is a much-needed piece of legislation to provide minimum safety standards to an unregulated industry. By requiring that riding establishments provide certified helmets and proper footwear to riders under 18, we will be putting the safety of our young people first, and we will be doing everything we can to see that preventable accidents are just that—prevented.

On Thursday, I ask for your support of Bill 156.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): In the members' gallery east we have a former MP, Mr Jim Jones, who was the member for Markham in the federal House. Would all members please join in welcoming our federal colleague.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (OUTSIDE RIDERS), 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (PASSAGERS À L'EXTÉRIEUR D'UN VÉHICULE)

Mr Galt moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit persons from riding on the outside of a motor vehicle / Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour interdire à des personnes de circuler à l'extérieur d'un véhicule automobile.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): This bill would increase road safety by prohibiting passengers riding on the outside of motor vehicles. Fire department vehicles and motorcycles are excepted, and there are some exceptions for those whose line of work involves riding in the back of a truck, including agricultural activities.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr Murdoch moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 174, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): It's my pleasure to introduce the Ontario Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, 2000. If passed, this act would allow each and every member of the provincial Parliament to have a real opportunity to effectively impact on proposed laws.

In short, every member of this House could vote to reflect the wishes of his or her constituents. However, if passed, this act would ensure that the defeat of a government bill would not mean the automatic defeat of the government. Governments would only be defeated in the

Legislature on express votes of confidence or non-confidence.

Nothing in this proposed act would impact on bills dealing with budgetary issues.

If enacted, this bill would see something unique in Ontario: representative democracy; the right to exercise a basic freedom, freedom of speech. It's my opinion that in today's government too much freedom of speech and too much honest representation are forfeited in the name of party discipline on both sides of the House. The Ontario Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, 2000, if passed, would mean the end of the trained-seal syndrome that has overcome this House.

1350

The Speaker: If the vote is tied, it's going to be interesting to see how the Speaker votes to break the tie on that particular one.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to give second and third readings to Mr Murdoch's bill.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would you help us to elicit from the member whether he has cleared this with the Premier's office and specifically with Guy Giorno?

The Speaker: As you know, that's not the Speaker's role. I can only guess what the answer to that question is.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of the House to change the title of the bill to the Sheriff of Nottingham Act.

The Speaker: I'm afraid that isn't able to be done even with unanimous consent.

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE FONDS DU PATRIMOINE DU NORD DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Murdoch moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to amend the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Act / Projet de loi 175, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Fonds du patrimoine du Nord de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Today I have the pleasure of introducing the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Amendment Act, 2000. This act, if passed, will designate the Bruce Peninsula, including the town of Wiarton, as part of northern Ontario, making it eligible for extra funding under the northern Ontario

heritage fund, which was doubled during last May's budget.

Recently, many of you will remember, the electoral riding of Muskoka-Parry Sound was given this northern designation, but what many of you may not be aware of is that Parry Sound and the village of Lion's Head are on the same latitude. Surely if one is to be considered northern, the other must as well. The Bruce Peninsula is equally deserving of the economic benefits of this designation.

I have, over the course of the last several months, received letters from local municipalities, hospitals and schools supporting a northern designation for the Bruce.

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS CONTRE L'EXPLOITATION SEXUELLE

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 176, An Act to protect children from sexual exploitation and to amend the Highway Traffic Act /
Projet de loi 176, Loi protégeant les enfants contre
l'exploitation sexuelle et modifiant le Code de la route.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The Attorney General for a short statement.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'll make a minister's statement.

ST. CLAIR PARKS COMMISSION ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA COMMISSION DES PARCS DE LA SAINTE-CLAIRE

Mr Jackson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to repeal and replace the St. Clair Parkway Commission Act /
Projet de loi 177, Loi abrogeant et remplaçant la Loi sur la Commission de la promenade Sainte-Clair.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The minister for a short statement.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): The proposals contained in this bill will continue the St. Clair Parkway Commission under a new act as the St. Clair Parks Commission. The proposed amendments allow for the exit of the municipality of Chatham-Kent; it is a request of their council to leave the commission. The new act will also create a new structure which will enable the commission to grow and to continue to provide world-class tourism and recreational facilities along the St. Clair River and the shores of Lake Huron, which is an important tourism gateway to our province.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILD PROTECTION

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Our children are our province's future. Our responsibility includes caring for them and helping them to grow into healthy, contributing adults. Protecting them from danger is our obligation. There should be no higher priority for us, as individuals and as legislators, than protecting our children from sexual exploitation and victimization.

Earlier today, I moved first reading of the Protecting Children from Sexual Exploitation Act. If passed, this legislation would protect children who are exploited by prostitution and assist them to begin a new life. These children are not offenders. They are victims, victims of abuse by adults, victims of exploitation by adults.

It is estimated that the majority of prostitutes in North America begin at the age of 13. To put that in perspective, the average 13-year-old is in grade 8. Children of that age should be attending school, playing sports or trading hockey cards with their friends.

Unfortunately, in small and large communities across Ontario, children 13 to 18 years of age are forced to become and stay prostitutes. Their stories are heart-wrenching. Many are runaways. However, running to the streets comes with many hazards: predators such as pimps and johns, regular beatings, and drugs.

Police officers will tell you the stories of these children. They will tell you about children who clutch teddy bears for comfort, yet know all about drugs and turning tricks. They will tell you about children who are terrified of breaking away from the person or persons who orchestrate and profit from their exploitation.

Today I'd like to welcome, in the public gallery, Detective Steve Tracy of the Toronto Police Service's juvenile task force. The input of the Toronto Police Service's juvenile task force is reflected in this bill, and their assistance is greatly appreciated.

It was through consultations with experts who work to help these children that our government was able to design this bill.

If passed, this bill would give police and children's aid society workers more tools to remove child victims of prostitution from dangerous situations and take these children to safe, secure places.

Police and child care workers would be able to remove the child from dangerous situations with or without a warrant. That means if a child is being held in a bawdy house, massage parlour or motel, a warrant could be obtained to enter the premises. A warrant would not be necessary when there is an immediate risk to the safety of the child.

The child would be placed in a safe, secure location where the children's aid society would assume responsibility for managing his or her care.

The bill recognizes that each child has different needs and that flexibility is required when deciding the appropriate assistance each victim should receive.

To respect the rights of the child, within 24 hours or as soon as possible a judge or justice of the peace would review the validity of the apprehension and the grounds to hold the child for five days. During the five-day period, a second hearing would be held. At this hearing, the court could extend the placement for up to 30 days; return the child to his or her parents, if appropriate supervision would be provided; or decide that the child should be dealt with under the existing provisions of the Child and Family Services Act.

1400

Once in a safe environment, a wide range of services would be provided to the children, including drug and alcohol counselling, specialized legal services, medical services like detoxification and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, and mental health services.

Adults who profit from and sexually exploit children are engaging in a form of child abuse. The offenders are the pimps who enslave the children and the johns who sexually exploit them. Under the proposed legislation, adults who prey on these children would have their driver's licences suspended.

This bill enhances the work currently being done by the Children's Secretariat to develop community-based outreach and education programs in collaboration with Save the Children Canada. Our government stands on the side of victims and children. The Protecting Children from Sexual Exploitation Act is just one step we are taking to ensure that all of Ontario's children are given the opportunity for a healthy future. It's one more step we are taking to ensure Ontario remains the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family.

This is a complex and highly emotional issue. I believe the proposed bill is a good start. May I acknowledge the work done by the honourable member for Sudbury on this issue, including his private member's bill. The bill I have introduced today is different in several respects, treating children as victims, not as offenders, giving both children's aid workers and police the power to detain, and creating time limits and important due-process protections for children. But I thank the member for his work, which has been of great assistance on this issue.

I look forward to the advice and input of members of this House and the public as we work together to refine this legislation in the best interests of some of the most vulnerable children in our province.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I appreciate the minister's comments and I appreciate the acknowledgement given to the member for Sudbury, but we have to say here that if adopting great Liberal initiatives on crime were a crime, this government would be a serial offender.

What we have today is nothing less than a legislative hat trick. In this legislative session alone, we have seen first Bill 129, An Act to authorize payments to the estates of the victims of the OC Transpo Tragedy, thanks to Dalton McGuinty. Secondly, we've seen Bill 67, an act

to crack down on phony guns, the imitation firearms act, about to become law. The last piece of the hat trick is in fact the ultimate hat trick. This bill before this House does not contain one private member's bill from the member for Sudbury, Rick Bartolucci; it doesn't contain two private member's bills from Rick Bartolucci. It contains three—count them, three—bills from the member for Sudbury, Rick Bartolucci. The member for Sudbury introduced Bill 18 originally, which then became Bill 10 and Bill 6, an act to crack down and deal with the victims of child prostitution; Bill 122, driver's licence suspension for johns and pimps; and Bill 146, cracking down on entertainment parlours. All these bills are contained in this bill.

So let the word go forth to all Ontarians: the bill currently before this House ain't a Tory initiative. Today is the day of the Bartolucci bill bonanza. Congratulations, Rick.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): There are many people to thank with the introduction of this bill. Certainly, I'd like to thank Dalton McGuinty and my Liberal colleagues for their direction, their support and their advice. I'd also like to thank Allan, the father of the teenage prostitute that I spoke of originally. It is in fact three years ago today that I first met Allan at the City Centre in Sudbury, and he was the motivation behind this bill. I phoned Allan today and congratulated him and his daughter Mallory, who had the courage to testify at the public hearings two years ago. I want to say to Allan and to all the Mallories who are out there, there is some hope now for you.

I also want to give credit to the Sudbury Regional Police Service, Chief Alex McCauley, Deputy Chief Jim Cunningham, Superintendent Ian Davidson and the 38 other police forces that wrote letters of support to the Attorney General, to the Premier and to the Solicitor General.

In particular, I want to thank Steve Tracy and Mike Beauparlant from youth services, who really dedicated themselves to this initiative.

Good ideas exist on all sides of the House. If there's a lesson to be learned from all of this, it is that we should react quicker to good initiatives so that the protection of the people of Ontario is paramount in our minds whether we are in government or in opposition.

To that end, I encourage the government to pass Bill 24, sponsored by Mr Hoy, with regard to providing a safer haven for children as they ride school buses, and Bill 73 by Ms Papatello, An Act to promote public peace and safety by regulating late-night dance events, such as raves. I suggest that those are two good initiatives that will provide the protections that are necessary for people in Ontario regardless of their age.

I would also suggest that it is important that while I support this legislation, I believe the legislation hasn't gone far enough. I honestly believe that in this legislation, although it recognizes that children who are being sexually exploited or abused are victims—and indeed the Attorney General is right; they are victims—we do not go far enough in punishing johns or pimps. My bill would

have allowed for punishment up to 24 months in jail and a fine of \$25,000. I believe johns and pimps have to know that there is punishment besides the punishment that exists in the Criminal Code of Canada.

I would suggest to the government that in future they ensure, if they're not going to adopt our ideas, that their reaction time is a lot quicker, because at the end of the day no one in Ontario cares who sponsors the initiative. They only care for good legislation.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm going to make it very clear that the New Democrats, just as they supported the private members' bills which gave rise to this legislation, are supportive of the goals that are being sought by virtue of the legislation introduced today. This is an incredibly disastrous crisis that children in Canada are out on the streets being sexually abused and sexually exploited at the ages as young as being spoken of by the Attorney General and by the private member during his address to his bills earlier in this House.

New Democrats join in the recognition of Detective Steve Tracy and others like him, women and men in our police forces who have a very special interest and passion, as well as compassion, for those youngsters from all over Canada who find themselves in major cities, Toronto perhaps first and foremost.

I say this to the Attorney General—and I don't diminish the seriousness of the issue in any way, but good God, Attorney General—a squeegee starts to look far more attractive as an option for a youngster out on the streets to eke out money on a daily basis than does prostituting oneself as a child in any number of contexts that carry with them their own unique special horrors and dangers for that youngster.

Attorney General, we say this to you: we're going to support this bill on second reading. You know, as well as other members of this assembly, that the bill deals with some strange contradictions in the law and the status of youngsters who are 16 and 17 years old as compared to being under the age of 16. I appreciate your comment, Attorney General, that it's not the role of any government, nor should it be, to victimize or criminalize the true victims. You're well aware of the litigation that has flowed from similar legislation in western Canada that has raised serious questions. You're proposing here some very dramatic intervention, forfeiture of freedom by young persons, in particular those who are 16 and 17. I'm talking about the prospect of effectively being arrested and being detained.

I appreciate that the legislation has what you hold out to be safeguards for those young people. During the course of what have to be committee hearings around this, there has to be discussion about the way the detention and restraint of any citizen, including 16- and 17-year-old citizens, is moderated to the point where it becomes least intrusive and where the rights of that young citizen are held as valuable as the rights of any of us.

I think also there has to be some clear discussion about exactly what types of programs we are talking about. I

find somewhat discouraging the prospect of detaining young persons, exposing them to the programs that you suggest will be made available, but those young persons, after whatever time frame, be it 15 days or 30 days, being right back out on the street, back to the lure of "the life," as it's referred to on the street.

I also suggest to you, Attorney General, that it's incumbent upon all of us to start talking in a far more serious way about exactly who these youngsters are, where they're coming from and how it is that they end up forced on to the streets, selling their bodies to support themselves and/or pimps who are controlling them and enjoying the profits. I think we have to have a far broader discussion in the context of this bill, Attorney General, about these young people, about where they're coming from and about what isn't there for them when they hit the streets by way of support and programs, and what isn't there and could and should be there in terms of non-judicial, non-police intervention so that people can be out there on the streets working with these young people, working with them in the context of drug addictions that undoubtedly are pervasive. For the life of me, I just am not about to condemn a young prostitute, or any prostitute, who takes drugs to sustain herself or himself during the course of their career, because I couldn't imagine how you could possibly do that without being stoned or on whatever drug happens to be available.

I think we have to be very careful that we look at this from a broad-based perspective, that we look at this as a crisis and as a serious social problem and not just a legal problem, and that we empower not only the police to intervene but any other number of appropriate agencies that can do as effective a job and a job that will have a long-term impact on those young people and on our communities.

VISITOR

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just like to recognize in the gallery this afternoon newly elected school trustee for Scarborough Centre Scott Harrison, who is also the son of the late, great Brian Harrison.

DEFERRED VOTES

CORRECTIONS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION EN MATIÈRE DE SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 144, An Act to establish accountability in correctional services, to make offenders demonstrate that they are

drug-free, to set rules for offenders to earn their release, to give the Board of Parole a say in earned release decisions, and to change the name of the Board of Parole / Projet de loi 144, Loi visant à instituer la responsabilisation au sein des services correctionnels, à obliger les délinquants à démontrer qu'ils ne font pas usage de substances intoxicantes, à fixer les règles que doivent suivre les délinquants pour mériter leur libération, à permettre à la Commission des libérations conditionnelles d'intervenir dans les décisions en matière de libération méritée et à changer le nom de la Commission des libérations conditionnelles.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1413 to 1418.

The Speaker: Mr Baird has moved third reading of Bill 144.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Harris, Michael D.	O'Toole, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Jackson, Cameron	Snobelen, John
Cunningham, Dianne	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
DeFaria, Carl	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Flaherty, Jim	Mazzilli, Frank	Tilson, David
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Tumbull, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Gill, Raminder	Murdoch, Bill	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garrý J.	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony
Bountrogianni, Marie	Dombrowsky, Leona	McGuinty, Dalton
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	McMeekin, Ted
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Parsons, Ernie
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Conway, Sean G.	Lankin, Frances	Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 33.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My first question today is for the Premier. You will know that I have asked your Minister of Education a number of times about our peace plan. She has continued to reject that substantive policy proposal, and she's offered a variety of reasons on different occasions as to why she cannot accept our peace plan. She told us at one time that it was simply too late to be of any value. She's told us it's unworkable, and she's told us it's too expensive. But yesterday I think she really provided the greatest insight into why she and, presumably, you are rejecting this peace plan. She said that to accept this proposal would be tantamount to capitulation.

She used the word "capitulation" yesterday in this Legislature, Premier, and that tells us everything about the perspective you bring to public education. Public education, from your perspective, is a battle, and our schools have become the battleground. In your attempt to be the winners at all costs, you've lost sight of students and parents, who are asking for peace.

Premier, this will be your first opportunity to comment on this peace plan in this Legislature. Will you join me in supporting this peace plan?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I thank the member very much, and I appreciate his interest. We've all said we would consider the proposal very carefully, and in fact the minister very carefully considered this proposal three years ago. This was the union position three years ago. Let me quote to you what the OSSTF proposed at that time: "If the government really wants teachers to spend more time in front of students, take a semestered school, extend the four periods of the semester day by 15 to 20 minutes. You've got another hour, not a half an hour. It won't cost you a penny and it won't reduce the teaching staff one iota." We rejected that.

The minister looked at that carefully three years ago, and you're recycling a three-year-old plan. At that time they offered to teach an extra hour at no cost. Why now, three years later, when we opted for a quality agenda instead of simply reducing workload, are you proposing a plan to go half as long, another half-hour, at a cost of \$150 million when three years ago they offered a full hour at no cost?

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you really have dedicated yourself to maintaining conflict in public education, haven't you? You have become so caught up in some sense of personal animosity that you aren't able to see through all this and understand that your first responsibility is to students. They need and deserve peace inside their schools.

Premier, you should be aware that this peace plan was up and running for two years straight in the Huron-

Superior Catholic District School Board. They wrote to me, and this is what they said:

"We note, with interest, the private member's bill, proposed by you under the title 'Peace Plan.'" Our board "is proud that such a plan has been in successful operation in our secondary schools for two years, (October 1998-June 2000)...."

"Essentially, the periods were lengthened—the day began earlier and dismissed later.... Teachers fulfilled the regulation of 1,250 classroom minutes per week and, most significantly, students received additional classroom assistance."

My plan has been road-tested. It has been proven to be roadworthy. It is being supported by parents and students and teachers and trustees and school boards. This is a good plan, Premier. Why can't you support it?

Hon Mr Harris: I don't know why you always side with the unions. I don't know why you're always after, "How can we have teachers work less? How can we reduce their workload?"

Three years ago, when a very similar proposal was brought forward—and at that time it was at no cost, as you know, and at that time it was an extra hour. We responded instead by hiring the same number of teachers that you are proposing, or more, to reduce class size. That was a quarter of a billion dollars. Since the union offered this proposal, the very same one you have, instead of extending the school day and instead of having a proposal that in fact did nothing to reduce class size and has nothing for quality, nothing but the union agenda of, "How do we work less?" we responded with more money than that: \$250 million for more teachers to reduce class size and improve quality.

Your plan, I guess, wants to go back three years, scrap that, scrap the reduced class size, and instead simply hire teachers to reduce workload. That's the union agenda. We rejected it—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, there's something you have never understood in the matter of public education. The delivery of public education is a team sport. Your problem is that as a coach, you don't know the first thing about getting the best out of our players. There's nothing wrong with the players; we just need a new coach.

Here's what the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board had to say about the plan that was similar to mine, which they had up and running for two years. They talked about how "the positive advantages far outweigh the present system that we were forced into by additional/revised government regulations," meaning Bill 74.

You may not like to spend much time thinking about their concerns, but this is what the chair of the school board said about students: students commented that under their plan, with the longer periods, they got a chance to ask more questions about homework, missed assignments, remedial work etc. Teachers felt they had more student time and were never in a rush between classes.

Premier, here is a positive, substantive policy proposal. It's supported by parents and teachers and students and school boards right across the province. If you can't put this into play, then you tell me, as the Premier, as the person ultimately responsible for peace in our schools, where's your plan?

Hon Mr Harris: I find it interesting that now, after we've spent \$263 million to hire more teachers, to improve quality and reduce class size, now you're three years back with a proposal that meets none of the requirements of the EIC report, meets none of the requirements of the Mustard-McCain report on where priorities are required. Your proposal talks about something you voted against when we brought it in. We have added school time. We added 10 school days to the secondary school year. You opposed that. You didn't like that idea; you didn't like more time. You didn't like more classes.

1430

There is absolutely nothing stopping any of our teachers from giving additional time at any time. In fact, the good teachers do that now. They do it willingly and co-operatively as they plan and they engage in extra-curricular activities.

So yes, we're interested in solutions that will improve the quality of education, but we're not interested in going back three years to the old union argument of, "Oh, I'm working too hard. Reduce my workload." I understand why you support it. You're in the pocket of the unions.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My second question is for the Premier. Premier, on November 16, 1993, you said the following about the NDP government, and I quote: "For a government that promised to be open, this closure action is the height of arrogance, the height of exactly everything you campaigned against and you said you were for."

We had a little bit of research done in this regard. We found that Bill Davis and Frank Miller cut off debate in this Legislature three times in four years. David Peterson did it four times in five years. Under Bob Rae, the number increased to 21.

I wonder if you'd care to take a guess at just how many times you've cut off debate in this House. Do you know what it was, Premier? You've cut off debate in the House, you have limited the democratic process in this House, 63 times. Given that you called it "the height of arrogance" when Bob Rae cut off debate 21 times, what do you call it when you cut off debate 63 times?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): If you'll check the record back even to the Bill Davis days, but certainly to the David Peterson days or the Bob Rae days, I think you will find you had a far more co-operative and responsible opposition than we have here in the Legislature today. That really has been the major change.

You will also find, if you check the record, that we have had more sitting days, we have had more sessions than the Rae government or the Peterson government.

We've had more night sittings than the Rae government or the Peterson government. We've had more public hearings than the Rae government or the Peterson government. We've had more debate and more time on legislation.

The only thing that's here is a totally irresponsible opposition.

Mr McGuinty: I'll give you one thing, Premier: you have a wonderful sense of humour. I never knew you were such a funny guy. You are really Mr Democracy in action. There's no doubt about that whatsoever, and you're generally perceived to be that throughout the province.

You would think most people would recognize that, but for some reason the Toronto Sun didn't. They were writing in an editorial this past weekend about your Employment Standards Act, and they had this to say about that. I thought you might be interested. The Toronto Sun called on you to abandon your "ongoing bid to rush into law far-reaching changes to the Employment Standards Act."

The Sun went on to say, "These changes ... could negatively impact on the working conditions of every employee in Ontario, particularly the most vulnerable."

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Question.

Mr McGuinty: Finally, the Sun said, "The Tories have yet to answer criticism that this really amounts to less pay for equal work, with non-union workers at the low end of the salary scale being the most vulnerable."

This is what the Toronto Sun had to say about your legislation. Government is a privilege as well as a responsibility. Part of the responsibility includes listening to what people have to say. Why won't you listen to what people have to say about your changes to your employment standards bill?

Hon Mr Harris: Certainly this is a piece of legislation that has undergone consultation and hearings by two separate Ministers of Labour. Even before the current minister came along there were extensive consultations.

Since you don't think we've had the same amount of debate or time as your government, let me talk about the 36th session. We've spent an average of four hours and 50 minutes on second reading debate; you spent an hour and eight minutes; the NDP spent an hour and 28 minutes. On third reading debate we've spent an average of two hours and 10 minutes; you spent an average of seven minutes for third reading debate; the NDP an average of 48 minutes. So clearly there was far more responsible opposition. It was probably able to get its point across without mundane, boring repetition like the failed opposition we have today.

With regard to the Toronto Sun, as right as the Toronto Sun is on many issues, they were either wrong then or they've not taken into account all the changes we've made since they wrote that.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, if we held a race for Premiers to determine who succeeded most when it came to missing in action, you would get the gold for missing in action.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order. Minister of Labour, come to order. Sorry for the interruption; the leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: I want to remind the Premier and Ontarians of the painful details once more. Bill Davis and Frank Miller cut off debate in this Legislature three times in four years. David Peterson did it four times. Bob Rae increased that number to 21 times. You, Premier, have established an all-time Western democracy record. You've cut off debate 63 times. You've shut down democracy 63 times; 63 times over you told Ontarians, "I don't care what you people have to say when it comes to this matter. I've got all the answers. I run the government. I run the show."

You know what, Premier? I think it's wrong to rob workers of their overtime pay. I think it's wrong to force parents to spend even more time away from their families. I think it's wrong not to hold open, public committee hearings. Why can't the people of Ontario have a say on how you direct your affairs?

Hon Mr Harris: I earlier indicated to you the fact that we provided far more debate on second reading and far more debate on third reading than either the Liberals or the NDP. But now you want to talk about consultations across the province. So here we have the Liberals when they were in government, and we've taken the same number of years they had: for committee travel time outside of Queen's Park, for the Liberals a total of 349 hours and 45 minutes; for the Progressive Conservatives a total of 798 hours and 14 minutes.

So we have provided more than double the amount of committee time for hearings for the people across the province, more second reading debate time and more third reading debate time than you did when you were in government, and more than when the NDP was in government. Clearly, the only thing that has changed is that the opposition is not nearly as responsible here in the Legislature as it was when we were in opposition.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I want to know how you can sleep at night when you personally are responsible for so much pain and so much devastation among the poorest citizens in Ontario. You broke the Charter of Rights with your spouse-in-the-house rule, you bully recipients of social assistance into signing liens for their home, and then you steal the child tax benefit from children who are forced to rely on social assistance.

Minister, this Christmas I want you to do us a favour: will you ask Santa for a conscience for yourself?

1440

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I'm not going to dignify that with an answer.

Mr Hampton: Minister, let me just go through the long list. Women came and asked you for emergency services so they could escape violence and abuse, and you turned them away. People with disabilities asked you to change the law so that people who live with disabilities would have a better chance. You ignored them. When people asked you to increase benefits for those who have to rely on social assistance, you held up your gold credit card and tried to insinuate that people who rely upon social assistance were somehow living high off the hog. Seniors are forced to use food banks and you say, "That's not a problem." There are more and more families facing homelessness; you say, "That's not a public problem." More children are living in poverty; you and your Premier say, "Hogwash."

Minister, how can anyone with a conscience give those kinds of answers, every day condemn people whose only problem is that they're poor? How do you do that?

Hon Mr Baird: We on this side of the House don't measure compassion by the extent of the hand out; we measure compassion by the extent of the hand up. Our government has brought in an economic agenda that has helped create more jobs, that has helped create more opportunity, so that more people in this province can realize the dignity that comes with a job and the pride that comes with being independent. In this province we saw child poverty reach an all-time high in 1993. Since this government has been elected, we've seen child poverty begin to decline. But we're not satisfied; we are not happy. Campaign 2000 said that just last week. We're not pleased by that, we're not satisfied with that; we said we could do more. That's why we continue to make job creation a big priority.

The member opposite spoke about violence against women. I am tremendously proud that since I became minister, funding within my ministry has increased by 15%, because I pushed that and this government pushed that. I'm tremendously pleased that since I became minister we saw a \$50-million increase supporting people with developmental disabilities. I supported that and this caucus supported that. We're seeing more and more people realize the dignity that comes with a job. We're not satisfied. We're going to continue to work hard so that more people can realize the benefits of a growing economy.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Minister, that line of rhetoric just isn't flying out there. When your government was elected in 1995, you were given executive powers. There was an expectation then, and there still is, that you would work co-operatively with Parliament, because Parliament represents different political persuasions, represents different communities from across this province and brings a sense of conscience and heart and soul to this place. We become the heart and soul of Ontario.

When you decided to turn over the delivery of programs to the most vulnerable and marginal in our

province to Andersen Consulting, you effectively split those functions. Minister, will you today return the heart and the soul and the conscience of this province to the issue of poverty and do something at Christmas for the poorest among us? Will you do that today?

Hon Mr Baird: I'll do that today and I'll do that each and every day. This government gets up every morning and works hard to try to create a growing economy. The member opposite wants to talk about when we were elected. When we were elected, there was despair in the land. Unemployment in my home community in 1995 was 10.9%. There was despair, people were unemployed and it wasn't getting better; it was getting worse. We took an economy on the brink of destruction and turned it around. We've seen more than 568,000 people break free from the cycle of welfare dependency. We've seen more than 800,000 people get jobs—net new jobs. They said it couldn't be done. Our agenda of cutting taxes and promoting economic growth is allowing more people than ever to realize the benefits that come with a growing economy, but not for one single moment do we suggest the job is done. Job creation continues to be a priority, ensuring that every single Ontarian who wants to work can realize the dignity that comes with a job and the pride that comes with being independent. That will be our priority and the job is not done. We continue to work hard on this side of the House.

LINDSAY-OPS LANDFILL SITE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. Anyone who has watched the Walkerton disaster shudders when they hear of the Lindsay-Ops landfill site. The landfill site is only 500 metres from the Skugog River and your Ministry of the Environment already admits that the water quality in the Skugog River isn't up to ministry standards.

The situation is so bad that the International Joint Commission is coming to Ontario to investigate groundwater contamination from the Lindsay-Ops dump site. Premier, when an international commission has to come to Ontario to study groundwater contamination, don't you think your government should stop any planned expansion of that dump site?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Minister of the Environment can respond.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I want to say today that a full environment assessment was conducted on the site once the county of Victoria had identified its preferred location with respect to the Lindsay-Ops landfill site. After an extensive public consultation, the county of Victoria submitted the Lindsay-Ops site as their preferred location. A submission under the Environmental Protection Act must still be reviewed and it's being analysed and approved by the ministry.

I cannot believe that the leader of the third party would come here today and talk about the Lindsay-Ops landfill. When his party was the government of this province, they approved the expansion of this site and the

expansion was given by the minister at that time. But what surprises me the most is that their expansion was not subjected at all to an environmental assessment. They accepted that site.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Minister, because the landfill was placed just 500 metres from the Skugog River, you do not have to repeat that mistake. You are the government right now and you know that years ago a lot of mistakes were made by many governments when siting landfill sites. We know a lot more today. You can laugh all you like, Minister, but after what happened in Walkerton we are more and more aware of the vulnerability of our drinking water. Don't you understand that your expansion plan will increase the loading of poisons to a river that provides drinking water to several communities?

We must learn from our mistakes. Surely after what happened in Walkerton you are willing to do that. We cannot play around with this any more. So will you do that? Will you just say no to an expanded Lindsay-Ops dump today?

Hon Mr Newman: Again I want to remind everyone that the county of Victoria undertook extensive public consultation to determine the preferred location as to the Lindsay-Ops site. There were three alternative sites that were identified, all of which were greenfields.

The decision was made locally to proceed with the Lindsay-Ops site, and after thorough technical analysis, we approved the environment assessment on this project and we stand behind that process. In fact, the county of Victoria's application has undergone extensive technical analysis to ensure that everything is adhered to. We have been absolutely clear on the Lindsay-Ops site. The expansion application has been subjected to a full environmental assessment. The approval of the environmental assessment spells out requirements as well as any additional approvals that must be taken by the proponent with respect to the expansion of this site.

WINTER CLOTHING ALLOWANCE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is for the Premier. Christmas is almost here and you have indicated to Ontarians that you want to know about children who need a Christmas gift this holiday season. You speak about your commitment to children, but your government's policies are leaving children cold. An Ontario Works policy allows low-income families to apply for a winter clothing allowance only in the month of November. I know of a family of four who did not qualify for the snowsuit allowance because they received a retro-active national child tax benefit in November. This month their income qualifies for the allowance, but the assistance is not offered in December.

Toys and games are an important part of the holiday season, but Premier, I would ask you for a true gift for these children, something you could do today that would immediately and significantly improve the lives of our

children. Will you give Ontario's children the gift of warmth? Will you act today to ensure that every child in Ontario who needs a snowsuit will get one?

1450

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): You're talking about an individual case, and I'm glad to look into the individual case for you. If you have other individual cases, I'm happy to look into those. Certainly we have a policy in my constituency office that if somebody comes who needs a coat, we get them one.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I do have another individual case, Premier, but I would suggest to you that this person isn't the only one to find themselves in this situation. A young mother came to my office. She had a baby on December 5, and Ontario Works would not help her buy a snowsuit for her newborn baby because she missed the November 30 deadline. Premier, it's a new baby, a new life, and instead of ensuring that baby stays warm this winter, your policy has turned its back on him. In Ontario, winter is longer than just one month. December and January are the coldest months of the year. You have a \$1.4-billion surplus, you have sent out \$200 cheques and you have promised gifts to Ontario's children. I'm asking you today to look after our most precious gift.

Premier, you have tried to assume the role of Santa Claus for Ontario's children. Instead of toys and games, will you ensure our children have what they need? Will you extend the timeline for the winter clothing allowance for Ontario Works families and will you do it for Christmas?

Hon Mr Harris: I appreciate the member's interest. I think she will acknowledge that no government has done more for children than this government with support programs, as evidenced by the fact that under the Liberal government children living in poverty went up, under the NDP government children living in poverty went up, and since 1995 children living in poverty has gone down according to every study, including the latest national study.

Having said all that, with 250,000 off the welfare rolls, with improving statistics, there are still children who need our help. I'm sorry that you mock and belittle my efforts to try and ensure that every child would have a toy at Christmastime. I will do my very best to do that. If you have any child who needs a snowsuit, who needs a coat, we have a program for that. If somebody is falling through the cracks, an individual case, please bring it to my attention if you can't resolve it locally, and I'll make sure we do the best we absolutely can for every child, for housing, for food, for clothing—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Premier's time is up.

MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY RATING PROGRAM

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. With Ontario's economy booming, both interprovincial and international trade have been steadily increasing in recent

years. Since the vast majority of Ontario's exports are transported by truck, the safety of these rigs, and I might add the safety of buses as well, is an important concern for people in this province. I understand that your ministry recently implemented what is referred to as a motor carrier safety rating program. Can you tell me about this program and what measures have been taken to ensure that the public has access to information on safety ratings of not only bus but also truck companies?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation):

In the past year over 75,000 public safety ratings have been assigned to bus and truck companies. Ratings summarize the safety performance of motor carriers and range from excellent to unsatisfactory. Ratings will help to enhance road safety by providing the public, shippers, the insurance industry, school boards and indeed government ministries with an opportunity to review the safety record of motor carriers prior to using their services. Safety ratings can now be retrieved at no cost on the Internet at www.carriersafetyrating.com. Additionally, the operating record of a bus or truck company or the driving record of a commercial vehicle driver can be viewed for just \$5. Internet access to these products has recently improved the flow of this information.

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Minister. It sounds like an excellent program, and it provides the public with an opportunity to access this important information on truck and bus safety. However, there are members of the public—and I'm thinking of some of the smaller trucking companies—who don't have access to the Internet. I suspect that may be the case with some people in my riding. What are the options for people in this position?

Hon Mr Turnbull: Individuals without Internet access can obtain information by visiting any Ontario driver and vehicle licence issuing office or government kiosk. Also, individuals can obtain, free of cost, guidelines on the carrier safety rating program as well as a manual to assist motor carriers in undertaking a self-audit of their safety performance by contacting MTO at 1-800-387-7736.

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Premier. I want to ask you to drop your partisan bluster. On behalf of 9,000—

Interjections.

Mr Kennedy: The members opposite are laughing. They're happy to have partisan bluster in place of responsibility. In each of their ridings there are students in the position of the students I want to raise with the Premier today, and those are the students in the Durham school boards.

Premier, in most of the province, your inaction, your lack of leadership has meant 105 days of no or reduced extracurricular activities. In Durham region, where you modelled the staffing which has caused this problem around the province, it has been missing for two and a half years. In that area, they tell us—in fact, not teachers

but the chair of the board tells us: "The loss of extracurriculars hasn't blown over and it won't blow over on its own. We have tried attracting parent volunteers in our schools, partnerships with community sports and reaching out to our local MPPs," who include members of your caucus.

Premier, will you, on behalf of the people in Durham, embrace the proposal we're putting forward, or put forward on your own something that will bring them back the extracurriculars you have helped to deny them for the last two and a half years?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The minister can respond.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): If the honourable member would read the local paper, the News Advertiser, he would note that many teachers, sometimes with harassment from other parties, do provide extracurricular activities in that community. They go beyond for the kids, because they know it is important for those kids.

I have been the first in this government to admit we have a problem with extracurricular activities and teachers choosing to work to rule and not provide them. I would like to know where the honourable member was when I was saying to all the partners in the union, "We need to find a resolution to this problem." The Liberals weren't raising this. We were raising this, because we recognized it was a problem.

There are several steps this government has taken. We still do not have it consistently across the province. We're not giving up until we get it resolved.

Mr Kennedy: This is what the parents and students around the province are afraid of. They're afraid of a minister who will ignore the problem they have just like she has ignored the problem in her own riding for two and a half years. Nothing has been done to restore extracurricular activities.

Now there's a solution on the table. The elected chair of the school board says, "We see a number of very positive things in what the Liberal Party is presenting. We believe the 1,250 minutes could be achieved if it is gone about in a different manner—it can be worked out but there has to be some flexibility by the teacher unions and the government."

We have had demonstrations outside here by people like Steven Murray, parents like Jennifer Thompson and Charlene Westbrook. They come from Whitby, Ajax and Pickering. They come here on behalf of students who are suffering the damage that you have an opportunity today to fix.

Minister, this is on behalf of the kids in your own area—two and a half years without extracurriculars. Many of them believe this is a good plan. Will you agree to at least make it possible by passing this bill, or a modified version of it, before the House rises tomorrow, or are you simply going to condemn the whole province to the purgatory that extracurriculars—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member's time is up.

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect, this is not a plan. This is a suggestion the OSSTF put forward three years ago.

When we put forward our quality reform agenda in education, we said that having better student achievement and bringing in a tougher curriculum was going to take a lot of work by all parties. We've asked students to work harder: we've extended their school year; they have more homework. We've asked parents to work harder; they're part of the team that has to help the students with the curriculum. We've asked school board trustees and officials in boards and the ministry. And we've asked teachers: four hours and 10 minutes, what other teachers are doing across the country, for increased student achievement. We're all having to work harder to make that happen. It's a worthwhile goal. It's an important goal and we're going to keep doing what we said we would do to achieve that goal.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, there are several excellent post-secondary centres in my riding of Scarborough Centre, both publicly and privately operated. With the introduction of the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, our government is acting to expand the choices available to students by allowing qualified private institutions to operate in Ontario. Minister, some of our government's critics have suggested that this means that somehow our public institutions will be compromised. What is the government's commitment to public colleges and universities in Ontario?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): Everyone in this House knows that over the years in this great province, the commitment of every succeeding government has been to public education, and that includes our colleges and our universities. We are committed to providing a place for every qualified and motivated student in our post-secondary system, and in order to do that we are facing a huge impact beginning about three years from now. We're preparing with the buildings, and last year, with our private sector partners, we invested \$1.8 billion in new buildings. Members in this House are looking at the progress that's being made.

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I will say in answer to the member from Kingston and the Islands that we also increased our operating dollars—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take your seat. This House stands adjourned for 10 minutes. Clear the entire gallery.

The House recessed from 1502 to 1513.

The Speaker: The member for Windsor-St Clair. The clock will be running, by the way.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): A very brief point of order, Mr Speaker, on your ruling to clear

the gallery: First of all, our security staff do an excellent job, and our Sergeant at Arms. It was very clear to members on this side of the House that in fact there appeared to be three people who were involved in the demonstration, and the whole gallery was cleared, including a number of high school students and indeed two legislative interns who have now turned up on the other side.

I would just ask you in the future, sir, recognizing the difficult job you have and the very difficult job our security have, that in clearing the gallery—in this case I believe we threw people out who really didn't deserve to be thrown out.

The Speaker: It's a difficult task, as you know, but my job is also to protect the members. In circumstances when people are protesting—in this case stuff was coming out of the galleries, and I'm going to err on the judgment of protecting the members. It's a difficult task. In a situation like that, where I can't judge who it is, it's unfortunate. We have some people who do come down here in good faith to see the goings-on and the proceedings, but when we do have a disruption like that it is very difficult for everybody. I've had the opportunity to watch some of the visitors in the gallery who, to say the least, are a little unnerved when it happens as well because they aren't used to seeing it.

I would say to all members on all sides, in situations like that, let the constables do their job. I agree with the member: they do an excellent job. There shouldn't be any encouragement or any yelling up to any members. We can quietly leave and let the constables do the job. That's the best way to deal with it.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Could I ask your indulgence and ask that the two minutes we just used be put back on the clock?

The Speaker: The point of order includes the two minutes. We're getting down now. We've had a period of time. It allows the freedom to sometimes do that, and if people want to use points of order, unfortunately you do it too much. I see the member's signal to me. Right, I'll let question period go on.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: We were talking about our commitments, as other governments in the past, and this one building on those commitments. Our first priority in this province is to public education, including our colleges and universities.

I was talking about increasing our operating funds by \$103 million this year alone. Our investment in research and development is second to none. We want our young people to get the best opportunities to stay in our colleges and universities, move on and be competitive with the world.

To close, we have created the new scholarship Aiming for the Top. Our young people, 4,000 of them, got those scholarships this year, up to \$3,500 every year that they maintain their marks. We are committed to our students and we are committed to our public institutions.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that answer, Minister. Ensuring quality and high standards is an important part of our government's policy at all levels of the education system in Ontario. Indeed, through our government's commitments to accessibility and research we have made significant investments in enhancing the quality of education offered at our colleges and universities. I believe it's important to our province that we continue to emphasize achievement and excellence in post-secondary education.

Minister, what measures does this legislation contain to ensure that new programs offered in Ontario serve both the students and the taxpayers by maintaining the highest standards?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Strengthening Ontario's reputation for excellence, which is our standard for our students, is an important goal of this legislation. Bill 132 creates a quality assessment board, and this quality assessment board will ensure that the calibre of any new programs will meet the test. There will be expert panels that will report to the quality assessment board and we will be relying on the best-qualified citizens in this province to serve on those boards. So excellence is what these programs will be about, if indeed approved.

I will also say that the new institutions must demonstrate this quality. There will be checks and balances. There will be performance indicators if they intend to offer well-equipped, degree-granting programs in the province of Ontario.

There are many steps that we have taken. We have listened to the input we have. We're confident that this legislation will increase choice and excellence for our students.

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Colleges and Universities. I want to talk to you about your scheme to price post-secondary education out of reach of most Ontario students. Phoenix university is a private outfit you're considering for Ontario, and they charge \$40,000 for a degree. Another outfit, PrimeTech Institute, is drooling with desire to offer private university education, which is expected to cost 85,000 bucks. Debt is already a veritable \$20,000 burden here for a general degree in Ontario.

How can you believe that \$40,000 for a Phoenix university degree and PrimeTech Institute, which is an \$85,000 degree, provide, as you say, innovative and flexible choices?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I actually object to the word "scheme." This is not a scheme; this is a carefully thought-through plan with a quality assessment board so that any private institution that will operate offering degrees in the province of Ontario will have better standards than any other private institutions.

May I add, we have private elementary schools; we have private secondary schools; we have private vocational schools. We actually have, indeed, some private

degree-granting institutions. Why wouldn't we have this kind of competition? What is the member afraid of? Our colleges and universities are not afraid of competition, and this is about students and about students' choice. They must be educated, make good choices, including the cost of their education.

1520

Mr Marchese: I just point out that the Canadian Federation of Students with signed petitions, hundreds of students, disagrees profoundly with your remarks, in addition to the fact that you don't answer the question very well, which is quite deliberate.

Under a Conservative government, tuition fees have increased 60%, with a corresponding explosion of debt. The evidence from Statistics Canada and other surveys shows that it's only the children of the wealthy who go to university. With your government taking \$1.4 billion out of operating funds since 1995, and yes, you've restored some of the funds, it's pretty bad in our university system. When will you share the bounty of this so-called prosperous economy with students, and our university that is desperately looking for your support?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I in fact have had many meetings with the Canadian Federation of Students. We have exchanged views. We have taken some of their concerns into consideration. But in the end there is one piece that's extremely important. We have a whole sector of students who are mature students. We have a sector of people who are working in the public sector whose institutions and jobs require that they upgrade their standards, that they complete degrees, that in fact they get applied degrees. Applied degrees will be possible under this legislation at our colleges. These are specific programs that our province needs young people and people in the workplace to have access to so we can be competitive.

This is a bill that provides people, no matter where they work, where they live, how old they are, with other opportunities for a post-secondary education. It's about choice and excellence.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. We all know that the aging baby boom generation of people with disabilities, many of whom are still living with their elderly parents, is a demographic fact. These men and women need residential services when their parents are no longer able to provide care. Thirteen agencies in the Kingston and Frontenac-Lennox and Addington area use a common process and a waiting list to house physically and developmentally challenged individuals.

Currently there are 86 men and women on the waiting list, eight of whom are in a crisis situation, yet the lack of adequate funding has forced both Ongwanada and the Association for Community Living to close two group

homes this past summer. Concerns have been expressed for almost two years to your ministry officials. The announcement last spring added only \$135,000 to the allocation for Frontenac county.

Since institutional settings are being closed and phased out, and since many of these men and women live much longer than in the past, and yet many of their parents are getting older and are no longer able to look after them, will you now commit to additional funding to ensure that these challenged individuals can live their lives to their maximum potential, and that their parents live out their remaining years without fearing for the future welfare of their children? Will you do the right thing, Minister?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): All members in the House will know that providing supports to people with developmental disabilities is an important priority for me as minister. Over the past 18 months we've worked very hard with associations for community living right across Ontario, building on the \$35-million investment made by my predecessor. We worked hard and got a \$50-million increase in the budget this year. While I recognize that didn't respond to all the challenges and all the need out there, it was the biggest increase in more than a decade and demonstrated this government's commitment to providing supports to people with a developmental disability.

This fall, since September, we've been consulting with associations right around Ontario to get their views and their suggestions on ways in which we might improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families. We've literally had hundreds of meetings across the province. As those discussions conclude, we'll take the time to reflect on what we've heard and come forward with additional measures.

Mr Gerretsen: More of these people are being de-institutionalized and are staying at home and need care. So whatever amount of money you're putting in, you need more.

As a result of a recent announcement at the Ministry of Transportation in which 150 ministry employees will lose their jobs, much anxiety has also been created for 55 people with disabilities who have been engaged in subcontract work, processing vehicle registrations and licensing for microfilming at MTO. These individuals have worked hard to establish their own businesses and have succeeded in forming five such co-operative corporations. From personal observation, I can tell you that this work has brought much dignity and meaning to the lives of these individuals.

If the records management department of MTO is contracted to an operator that removes it from the Kingston area, 55 people with disabilities and seven non-disabled workers will lose their jobs and five businesses owned by these disabled workers will be lost as well. What assurances can you give those 55 individuals that their contract, which they have so effectively carried out

over the last 10 years, will be secure so that they can live out their lives with dignity and feelings of self-esteem that they have received as a result of jobs they've been able to do for MTO?

Hon Mr Baird: I'll certainly take the opportunity to look into the issue which the member opposite raises. I can say that providing additional supports, employment supports to people with a developmental disability through our ODSP is important. Over the next number of years we'll be doubling the budget for employment supports so that more people with disabilities, particularly those with a developmental disability, can realize the dignity that comes with a job and the place that makes for them. But as I said, I'd be very pleased to look into it.

The announcement which you raise—I look at David Barber, the president of the Ontario Association for Community Living: "The minister should take full credit for listening and responding to the concerns that families and their associations have expressed."

Sue Dolan, the president of OASIS: "Your May 5 announcement"—which I made in Kingston—"demonstrates the government's commitment to individuals and families with developmental disabilities."

David Barber, the president of the Ontario Association for Community Living: "You have rebuilt these channels of communication and re-established the trust."

We'll continue to work exceptionally hard to provide more opportunities for people with a developmental disability in this province.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN LONDON

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): My question is for the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. Minister, yesterday you were in London announcing a \$127-million investment at the University of Western Ontario. This is to go toward research and development in the province. Can you tell us how these investments will help London area researchers?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I appreciate the question from the member from London-Fanshawe. In fact, the total amount we announced yesterday was \$150 million, \$127 million from the Ontario Innovation Trust and \$23 million in Ontario government support from the research and development challenge fund. Four very interesting projects were announced for Western and the London Health Sciences Centre, totalling about \$21.5 million in support from the Ontario government.

One we can all be very proud of is that Dr Douglas Boyd is proposing to establish the National Centre of Minimally Invasive Robotic Surgery. Last year, a first in the world, Dr Boyd performed the first beating-heart coronary bypass using robotic arms and a miniature camera. In the past, prior to perfecting this surgery, you used to have to rip open the sternum and open the chest cavity in order to do bypass surgery. Dr Boyd has successfully done a number of operations now using a

camera and a robot. It's very precise surgery with less recovery time for patients. In fact, one of the patients, Wally Seip, who was operated on on his 67th birthday, on October 4 of this year, was there. The honourable Minister Cunningham and I and others were there to witness the tremendous health he's in and the tremendous technology that this operation has brought—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?

Mr Mazzilli: These investments speak well for Londoners, and indeed Ontario will benefit. The robotic surgery that you mentioned—the Premier was in London and actually had an opportunity to use the equipment very successfully, just practising.

As you know, government cannot be the sole investor in research and development. While our government strives to move Ontario's economy forward, we need the private sector to create jobs and invest in Ontario. Can you tell me how the private sector investment is going in research and development?

Hon Mr Wilson: Again, with yesterday's announcement for Western and the London Health Sciences Centre and Fanshawe College of \$21.5 million of Ontario government support, that's the leveraged total of all four projects announced for the London area yesterday of \$60 million: a third from the private sector, a third from the province and a third from the university, the hospital and Fanshawe College.

1530

Another project I want to mention is the Shared Hierarchical Academic Research Computing Network, or SHARC-net as it is called, the world's fastest computer, located at the University of Western Ontario. It is a tremendous partnership with Compaq Computer, the university and the Ontario government. We are very proud of it. They already have a waiting list of people to do large computations on that computer. We can be very proud that we have the world's largest and fastest computer here in the province of Ontario. It puts us on the leading edge for new jobs, high-tech jobs, and it positions London and southwestern Ontario to be world leaders in high analysis, high-end computer programming and operations.

ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORY

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Roger Hacker, director of animal research, says support for the animal lab by the government is anything but strong, that the facility is inadequate in its ability to diagnose and attack diseases. Larry Milligan, vice-president of research, confirms there's been a \$3.5-million cut, and an additional \$4.2 million. Dr Pat Shewan, chair of patho-biology, cites inadequate funding, leaving the lab little latitude to do anything proactive. Will you meet with these individuals?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I want to reiterate, as we did yesterday, the comment on the issue the member opposite

referred to. He suggested we were going to reduce the budget. The manager of the animal health lab in Guelph said that was not the case. The member opposite was totally wrong. He was inappropriately or wrongly informed, or was telling less than the truth. As it relates to whether I will meet with the—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Stop the clock. I may have heard the minister wrongly. I don't know if he referred to him as not telling the truth. If he did, I'm sure he would withdraw that.

Hon Mr Hardeman: I'm sure I would not imply that the member would not tell the truth. I was just referring to the fact that what he was saying was not the facts. I want to point out to the member opposite that the animal lab services are run by the University of Guelph under contract with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and I want to assure the member that we meet regularly with the university to discuss the contract and to make sure—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. Supplementary?

Mr Peters: Minister, I would ask you to meet with Roger Hacker; I would ask you to meet with Larry Milligan; I would ask you to meet with Dr Shewan. Yesterday you said I was totally off the mark. I'd ask you to meet with Dr Carl Ribble, head of population medicine, who says the province keeps upping the ante as to how the lab has to pay for itself, going down the Alberta route of privatization.

Deborah Whale, chair of the Poultry Industry Council, says government policy has endangered the livestock and poultry industries, citing small, overcrowded facilities, undersized labs and outdated equipment. The lack of a level 3 testing facility forces them to go out of the province. She calls it an issue of public health and safety.

Minister, why are you not talking to the real people to get the real answers instead of spouting political doublespeak in this Legislature? I'm giving you a heads up today. Talk to those people. Go meet with them first-hand, as the member from Guelph-Wellington did, to hear the damage you're inflicting, cutting their capital budget, forcing them to buy second-hand equipment, not giving them adequate dollars to do the important things that are needed in this province.

Minister, I ask you again: will you commit the funding to ensure that this lab meets adequate levels? Would you meet with the—

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Hardeman: I want to assure this House and the member opposite that food safety is the number one priority for the agriculture and food industry. As it relates to speaking to the real people, one would I think appropriately suggest that if you were going to speak about the function of the lab services in Ontario, one would speak to the people responsible for operating those lab services.

The member opposite suggests that I made quotes. Yesterday I was not quoting myself. I was quoting from a newspaper article in the Guelph Mercury, where the person responsible for operating the lab services said, "That information"—and this was the information the

member opposite was presenting, "... Manager Pat Collins responded Wednesday to Peters's figures. 'It's just plain wrong. I think he's completely off base. What we're getting back from OMAFRA is strong support for the program.'"

That's what the operator of the service said, and I can assure the member opposite I'm quite prepared to meet with all the people who are involved in working in that place to make sure we're getting the best quality—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a petition to the Ontario Legislature. It deals with the northern health travel grant. It's northerners demanding that the Harris government eliminate health care apartheid.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;

"Whereas a recently released Oracle research poll confirms that 92% of Ontarians support equal health travel funding;

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province; and

"Whereas we support the efforts of OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Loughheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature to it and give it to Pascal Bouchard from Elliot Lake to bring to the table. This is a 1,500-name petition, part of the 69,250 signatures that we have received in northern Ontario.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas domestic violence detrimentally impacts on the very survival of thousands of women in Ontario;

"Whereas the sole emphasis on punitive measures ignores that only a small fraction of domestic violence cases get to, let alone get through, the justice system;

"Whereas issues of prevention, investigation and redress of domestic violence need immediate and meaningful attention by the Legislature;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: (a) provide funding for second-stage housing, emergency shelters and to organizations concerned with domestic violence; (b) provide training in domestic violence issues for police, lawyers, judges and justices of the peace; (c) address recommendations from the May-Iles inquest regarding the capacity of this province to prevent, investigate and redress acts of violence in the family; and (d) promote studies on the causes, nature, prevalence and consequences of domestic violence and on the capacity in Ontario to prevent, investigate and redress acts of violence in the family."

I have over 200 signatures on this petition and I will affix my signature as I agree with this petition.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Whereas diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers a bundle. It is the leading cause of hospitalization in Canada. Some people with diabetes simply cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing diabetes. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood, and even reuse lancets and needles. These budget-saving measures can often have disastrous health care consequences;

"Whereas persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes. We think it is in all Ontarians' and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain the best glucose control possible. As you all know, good control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control."

I affix my signature.

1540

REPLACEMENT OF BRIDGE

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a large number of signatures on this petition from Dubreuilville.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the existing Highway 519 bridge over the Magpie River, south of Dubreuilville, is a single-lane, 45.7-metre span Bailey bridge; and

"Whereas the safety of the residents, workers and visitors driving into and out of Dubreuilville is constantly jeopardized because of the single-lane capacity; and

"Whereas the minister has been made aware that there is an immediate need to replace this single-lane bridge with a two-lane bridge; and

"Whereas the ministry has agreed to prepare a design for a future double-lane replacement bridge, however, they have not yet approved this project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and the Ontario government once again to immediately approve the replacement of the single-lane Bailey bridge by a two-lane bridge."

I agree with this petition and have affixed my signature.

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got thousands of names on these petitions of students who oppose for-profit universities. It reads:

"Whereas the Ontario government's Bill 132 permits private corporations to apply to open private for-profit universities; and

"Whereas once private universities are part of the post-secondary system, international trade laws would prevent Ontario from discriminating against foreign corporations and keeping them out; and

"Whereas Bill 132 allows the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to delegate important public responsibilities to an unelected board and allows public resources to be used by the private universities; and

"Whereas Bill 132 entrenches a corporate-driven definition of quality into the post-secondary system, promotes a hierarchy of institutions and allows post-secondary administrators to contemplate further job reductions and cutbacks to service delivery;

"We demand that private for-profit universities be rejected and the legislation be enacted to guarantee our right to accessible, affordable, publicly administered post-secondary education, academic freedom and democratic regulation of the post-secondary system in Ontario."

I support this fully and I will sign this petition.

SEWAGE SLUDGE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of the Durham riding have raised concerns over the spreading and storage of sewage sludge and biosolids; and

"Whereas Bill 149 has been introduced by Durham MPP John O'Toole to regulate the spreading and storage of sewage sludge and biosolids, including paper sludge; and

"Whereas Bill 149 would require that no persons shall spread sewage sludge or other biosolids without a certificate of approval or provisional certificate of approval from the director;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To pass Bill 149 to amend the Environmental Protection Act and add the relevant sections regarding the spreading and storage of sewage sludge."

I'm very pleased to receive this and present it to the House today. Jessica is going to take it to the table for me.

HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has produced a \$1.4-billion budgetary surplus this year, and a provincial economy that has grown more than that of the US or any G7 country this year;

"Whereas there are many people living in the streets of Ontario despite this time of apparent wealth;

"We, the undersigned, are concerned with the increasing number of homeless and poor people on the streets of Ontario. We, the undersigned, feel the provincial government needs to take responsibility for this issue and would like the government of Ontario to seriously address the problem of homelessness and poverty in Ontario in an attempt to solve the problem."

This petition comes from Lakeshore Catholic High School, home of the Gators, in Port Colborne, Ontario. I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement with the sentiments of this petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition regarding this government's ongoing discrimination against northern cancer patients. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;...

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province; and

"Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Loughheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

I agree with the petitioners. I have affixed my signature to it. Most of these petitioners are from North Bay, the Premier's own riding.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): As we approach the Christmas break, I think it's important that the government understand that the discrimination we face related to the northern health travel grant is unacceptable to all northerners, and petitions continue to come in. I will read this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and, therefore, that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in their communities."

We will not give up this fight. I am very proud to add my name to this petition. I will pass it on to Silvia.

FRAIS DE TRANSPORT AUX FINS MÉDICALES

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay) : J'ai ici une pétition des gens de Smooth Rock Falls qui dit comme suit :

« Pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Les gens du nord exigent que le gouvernement Harris mette fin à l'apartheid en matière de soins de santé.

« Attendu que, d'une part, le programme de subventions accordées aux résidents du nord de l'Ontario pour frais de transport à des fins médicales offre un remboursement partiel au taux de 30,4 cents par kilomètre à aller seulement, à l'intention des personnes atteintes de cancer, et que, d'autre part, la politique de déplacement pour les gens du sud de l'Ontario rembourse en entier les coûts de transport, de repas, et d'hébergement ;

« Attendu qu'une tumeur cancéreuse ne connaît aucune politique de transport pour les soins de santé ni de région géographique ;

« Attendu qu'un sondage de recherche Oracle publié récemment confirme que 92 % des Ontariens appuient un financement égal de transport à des fins médicales ;

« Attendu que les résidents du nord de l'Ontario paient le même montant d'impôts et ont droit au même accès aux soins de santé, ainsi qu'à tous les services du gouvernement et à tous les droits de personne inhérents que les autres résidents de la province ;

« Attendu que nous soutenons les efforts de l'OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), une association récemment fondée par Gerry Loughheed Jr, ancien président de Action Cancer Ontario, région du nord-est, afin de redresser cette injustice envers les personnes du nord de l'Ontario qui doivent se déplacer pour recevoir des traitements anticancéreux ;

« En conséquence, il est résolu que les soussignés exigent que le gouvernement Mike Harris propose immédiatement de financer en entier les frais de transport à l'intention des résidents du nord de l'Ontario atteints de cancer, et de mettre fin à l'apartheid qui existe présentement dans la province de l'Ontario en matière des soins de santé. »

Je signe cette pétition.

HUNTING AND FISHING LEGISLATION

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Mike Harris committed in August of this year at the International Symposium in Ottawa to see hunting and fishing legislation introduced at Queen's Park;

"Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources, the Hon John Snobelen, has vowed on several occasions to bring forth legislation pertaining to hunting and fishing;

"Whereas hunting and fishing continues to be an important industry in Ontario because of its recreational, economic and humane benefits to the province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial Ministry of Natural Resources bring forward as soon as possible an act entrenching hunting and fishing in the province of Ontario."

I will sign that.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it has been determined that recent funding allocations to the developmental services sector in the communities of Sarnia-Lambton, Chatham-Kent and Windsor-Essex have been determined to be grossly inadequate to meet critical and urgent needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Community and Social Services immediately review the funding allocations to the communities of Sarnia-Lambton, Chatham-Kent and Windsor-Essex, and provide funding in keeping with the requests made by families and/or their agents."

Signed by a number of residents of Tilbury, Chatham, North Buxton and Blytheswood. I affix my name to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 152, An Act to implement the 2000 Budget to establish a made-in-Ontario tax system and to amend various Acts, when Bill 152 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That the order for third reading of the bill may then immediately be called. When the order for third reading is called, two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, the debate time being divided equally among the three caucuses, after which time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 28(h), the vote on third reading may not be deferred; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Before we begin debate on this, yet another time allocation motion, I beg the indulgence of the House for a moment to share with you that I have become increasingly concerned over the last number of weeks and months here about the lack of debate about important issues that affect all of the people across this province and every one of our jurisdictions and the role that I play in that. I am no more concerned than about the issue of poverty and how we

cannot seem to get that issue on to the table of this place so that we can have a real debate about that reality which affects so many of our neighbours, our family members, our brothers and sisters out there. I find it in my own personal conscience that I can no longer serve as the Deputy Speaker in this place and so will be laying my robe on the chair.

I'm inviting all of you to participate with me as I preside over another forum which has been set up at Victoria College at the University of Toronto that will take place this afternoon until midnight tonight and until midnight tomorrow night.

I will be calling for a 10-minute recess so that the table can, with all due respect, replace me in this job.

The House recessed from 1554 to 1604.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Klees has moved government notice of motion 90. The chief government whip.

Hon Mr Klees: I would seek consent to yield the floor to my colleague the member for Willowdale.

The Speaker: Is there consent? Agreed.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): Thank you very much for providing me with this opportunity to speak to this very important bill, a bill that allows us to fulfill a Blueprint commitment, a commitment that we went to the people of Ontario with in written form, in some detail, considerable detail, the year before last.

We said to the people of Ontario during the election campaign that if they provided us with the further privilege of re-electing our government—as they did; they provided us with a second majority government—if they returned us to this assembly, we would continue the policies that were commenced in the Common Sense Revolution, which was the first policy document we went to the people of Ontario with in 1995. We would continue policies that were designed to ensure the people of Ontario would continue to see growth and prosperity.

As I have stated before in this Legislature, our government's vision for Ontario is of a province that encourages people to innovate, a province that encourages people to create, a province that has a strong social safety net to ensure that those in true need can get assistance to get back on their feet. Our government is sticking to its revolutionary plan that will help build a strong, healthy province.

Mr Speaker, over the last short time in this Legislature, there has been some discussion and demonstration of concern surrounding the time allocation aspect of this initiative. I want to say to you, to those in the gallery and to those watching at home that when governments take office they are faced with a number of different options. They can study and study, and they can debate and debate, and no matter how good the intentions of the individual members of that government, after lengthy debate and consultation and after study ad nauseam, at the end of the day there is no time for passage of the bill. Governments of all political stripes have fallen into this trap. It is not a trap the Harris government has fallen into. We believe in moving forward with initiatives. We do

not believe in simply talking the talk; we believe in walking the walk. That is why we have passed so many pieces of legislation in this session and in prior sessions, and that is why we've been in a position to cut taxes on so many occasions.

I want to talk a little about what led to this legislation, essentially the budget bill we're discussing today and that we have been discussing over the last short time, and why I believe it is most appropriate in this instance for the budget bill to proceed in a timely fashion, as we are suggesting in the time allocation motion moved by Mr Klees a few moments ago. In order to understand why it is appropriate and why it is time for action and time to put the dialogue—the lengthy consultation process—behind us, because that has taken place, one has to consider how much time was spent conferring with the people of Ontario and with the other parties in this assembly. After considering that, I am sure you will agree, as do I, that it is time for action. We cannot leave ourselves in a state of paralysis where all we do is talk and we do not act. That's not the way of this government.

The minister undertook extensive prebudget consultation with Ontarians. His efforts included the following: 13 round-tables, representing a broad spectrum of interests, and invitations that were sent out to 370 organizations and individuals. In total, 220 organizations from across the province participated. Three hundred individuals participated in the consultation process that commenced about 11 months ago and continued until this piece of legislation was tabled. The ministry received and reviewed 150 further written submissions—and that is probably a low, conservative, modest estimate—in addition to the consultations I just mentioned.

The minister also participated in the prebudget efforts that were made at the standing committee level, as did many members of this Legislative Assembly. That all-party committee, with representation from all three parties in this assembly, spent 10 days conducting hearings, and they did not limit those hearings to the city of Toronto or other major urban centres across the province. They travelled to places like Timmins, Kenora and Chatham. They did so to engage in a good-faith, meaningful consultation with the people of this province, and they did just that.

1610

The standing committee—again, an all-party committee—commenced its work about 11 months ago, to come forward with the piece of legislation we're here to talk about today. It's time to get on with it. The standing committee heard from 102 organizations as diverse as trade unions, social advocacy groups, community organizations and businesses. We heard from individuals, and the standing committee also received 44 written submissions. The standing committee's report on prebudget consultations was indeed a valuable resource, a tool the Minister of Finance utilized in putting together the budget.

That budget has been the subject matter of many hours of debate in this Legislature over the last three weeks or

so. All parties have debated that piece of legislation. I have had the honour of being present for almost all that debate. I will say, Mr Speaker—and I preface my comments by saying that this is somewhat partisan rhetoric coming from this side of the Legislature, as opposed to the partisan rhetoric we heard earlier coming from the Speaker's chair. I will preface my comments by saying that the dialogue on both sides of the House to date during the hours and hours of debate on this legislation has been very partisan and very repetitive.

I can predict what the Liberals and New Democrats would say if they were to speak for another one or two or three dozen hours. It's the same thing they said to the people of Ontario when they campaigned in 1995. It's the same thing they said during the last session, the four years we were in government from 1995 to 1999. It's the same rhetoric we've heard since we resumed office in 1999. They don't agree with our approach; that's acknowledged. They don't think for a moment that the right attitude is for us to implement further tax cuts. They're reluctant, they are resistant to acknowledge that each year we have \$14 billion more coming into the coffers of this province as a result of the tax cuts we have implemented. They found that to be an offensive approach in 1995, and they continue to feel that way.

I understand that the Liberals and the New Democrats don't support the tax cuts we have implemented. That's a given. For them to say it again and again, I guess, is their job. But with the greatest respect, it isn't what the people of Ontario want and deserve. They want and deserve a government that's going to move forward, a government of action, a government that is going to keep its promises, and that's exactly what we are doing.

We have come a long way in slightly in excess of five years. We all remember that in the early part of the 1990s our province experienced the most difficult times, arguably one of the most difficult times in our history. Unemployment was high, welfare rolls were bursting at the seams, deficits and debt were crushing the government's ability to deliver quality services to Ontarians. I want to come back to that, because I talked about a strong social safety net earlier. I want you to know, Mr Speaker—and it's not just rhetoric—that I sincerely believe that in order for a government to do what it must do, in order for it to be in a position to look after those who require and deserve assistance, the government has to have the financial wherewithal to do so. You don't have that ability, that economic might, if you spend beyond your means over and over again. You don't have that ability, and you cannot sustain a level of spending the likes of which was in place before the Conservatives took office.

Without going through all the rhetoric again, let's remember that when we took office, the predecessor government in the early part of 1995 indicated that it was going to run a deficit in excess of \$11 billion. They were going to spend in excess of \$1 million more an hour than they were taking in. You cannot do that for any length of time and be left in a position where you can look after those within this province who require assistance.

The rhetoric around this province, in restaurants, around water coolers and in homes back in the early 1990s, was one of pessimism, was one that talked in terms of this province becoming bankrupt. Few believed that the economic plan that we outlined in the Common Sense Revolution would work. The pundits and the non-believers were numerous, and they said that Mike Harris's plan to cut taxes while protecting priority services was ludicrous, that it was crazy, that it was trickle-down voodoo economics. They suggested that that would bankrupt the treasury and we'd have less money coming in if we implemented tax cuts, that as a result we'd be spending less money on public education and we'd be spending less money on health care. They said it rather emphatically. Many of the Liberal and NDP members present in the House this afternoon were the authors of many of those doom and gloom predictions back in 1994-95 leading up to the election of the Mike Harris government.

I am here to say to you, and the facts and the numbers confirm, that the sky has not fallen, that since we've taken office the fortunes of this province have turned around. In fact, Ontario's future has never been brighter. This past spring, we balanced the budget, just as we had promised to do. Minister Eves delivered the first back-to-back balanced budgets in over 50 years—the first time in over 50 years that we've had successive balanced budgets in this province. I'm proud to say I was part of a government that did so.

A few weeks ago, Minister Eves delivered even more good news, more success stories about how the people of this province are making Ontario a world-class place to do business, a world-class place to live and a world-class place to run a family. So today, as we approach the end of the year 2000, our economy is still growing faster than that of any other G7 nation. Our businesses are still creating jobs at a vigorous pace and hard-working Ontarians are still creating new opportunities.

Let's emphasize the last point, because it is the work of the hard-working people of Ontario, it is their efforts, that deserve the greatest round of applause, accolades. They're the ones who deserve the praise.

This strong economic growth that I've described is reflected in record job creation numbers: 184,000 net new jobs have been created in this year alone, in the year 2000 alone. Since 1995, in excess of 830,000 net new jobs have been created in this province. Since we've taken office, there are almost a million more individuals working.

Even some of the naysayers have of late acknowledged that we are indeed on the right track. I want to, if I may, quote in a moment from an individual who was one of our greatest critics for the many years that we implemented tax cuts and suggested that this would be the way to make Ontario more competitive, that this would be the way to turn around the fortunes of the economy.

But before I do that, I'm going to take a moment to anticipate what the Liberals and the New Democrats will

say when they have an opportunity to speak because, again, as I said before, I am quite aware of the fact that through the debate that has taken place with reference to this bill and through the discussions that took place before this bill was tabled, there is a level of repetitiveness in the dialogue. There isn't much new, frankly, that has come up. They have their approach and we have ours.

I'm sure that before long a Liberal member of the Legislature or perhaps a New Democratic MPP will get up and say that it's thanks to the American economy that we in this province have experienced success. In fact, I hear my friends across the way say that with some regularity. "Thanks, Bill Clinton," I think the member for St Catharines is prone to say.

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I challenge any member of the opposition to step out of this Legislature and go into an auto factory in, say, Windsor or Oshawa, or perhaps a high-tech firm in Waterloo or Ottawa—

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): How about Alliston? Honda.

Mr Young: —or, as my friend from Simcoe North correctly talks about, the Honda assembly facility in Alliston that is world-renowned.

I challenge the members opposite to do more than just shout back and forth within this assembly if they really believe what they're saying. I think they're wrong, but if they really believe what they're saying, why don't they walk up to the hard-working men and women who get up each morning and go to these factories, go to these offices and go to these companies? Why don't the Liberals and New Democrats say to them, say to their faces, that their hard work has nothing to do with the success they've achieved personally and that this province has achieved? Why don't they say that thanks to Bill and Hillary, they've achieved any level of success? They won't do that because it's simply wrong. It's because of the hard work of the people of this province, it's because they wake up each and every day and take pride in their work that this province has achieved the recovery it has over the past short while.

Over the past number of months we have seen numerous individuals come forward and talk about the financial success of this province. Let's listen to what the Bank of Montreal recently had to say about Ontario. They said the following: "We estimate that the broad-based expansion in Ontario will continue at a robust pace. Overall consumer and business confidence should remain firm, keeping the province well positioned for sustained expansion in subsequent years." They went on to say, "The healthy state of Ontario's economy is reflected in its stellar labour force performance and strength in all major categories of demand, consumer spending, housing business, investment and exports." Indeed, they are right.

Ontario has now become not only competitive as compared to other provinces in this country; Ontario has become the envy of almost any economy in North

America and, as I indicated earlier, is growing at a rate higher than that of any other nation within the G7. That is undoubtedly why the Prime Minister of this country recently, while speaking in the United States at a major university I believe, crowed about how Ontario is as competitive as or more competitive than any US state. He now understands that we have reconfigured this province to a point where a business deciding where to settle, where to bring its investment dollars, where to create wealth, where to create jobs, a business like that must seriously consider Ontario.

Our government's comprehensive economic policy of cutting taxes, cutting red tape, eliminating the deficit and paying down the debt and restructuring government services for greater efficiency is making Ontario a place where companies like that, where individuals, want to invest, want to do business and want to raise their families.

Our government is also making record investments in education, in health care, as well as in research and development. I come back to that because I started my comments this day by talking about how important it is that we have a strong economy in this province so that we can sustain the social infrastructure that we all take pride in. I mentioned it in the middle of my comments as well and I come back to it by way of conclusion because I sincerely believe that.

I'm very proud of the fact that we're spending in excess of \$22 billion on health care in this province. We do that annually. It's a greater amount than has been spent by any other government prior to this one. It's a greater amount than is being spent in any other province and it is an amount that is in excess of what we had promised the people of Ontario we would spend. We're spending more at an earlier stage. We said we'd get to this point at some point during the term, but I'm proud to say we have almost fulfilled that Blueprint commitment many years ahead of schedule.

It is because of the economic strength of this province that we are in a position to do that and it's because of that I feel it is so important that this budget legislation is passed in a timely manner so that the success within this province may continue.

The Speaker : Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to continue the debate on another motion to cut off debate and to say how sad we are that this happens.

The previous member talked about consultation. I just say that the finance minister, who is the one who defends government policy on financial and fiscal matters, has spent more time with Tiger Woods since he became finance minister than he has with our legislative all-party committee. Every year we have begged him to come to our committee for more than an hour. He comes for one hour once a year to the duly-elected, all-party legislative committee. He gives us one hour. He spends 15 minutes with a presentation and then gives 15 minutes to each party for questions and then he's gone for another year and refuses to come back. We want him to come to

debate tax policy because part of the bill we're debating here is to cut our taxes in Ontario dramatically lower than our neighbouring US states. We understand the reasons for that but we said to the minister, "Why don't you come and tell us how we are going to be able to afford our health care system, our education system, our quality of life." He refused to come.

In my leader Dalton McGuinty's and our caucus's opinion, we have blown a golden opportunity in Ontario. We've now spent the last five years missing the opportunity to get our health care system, our education system, our social housing system, our labour relations and our quality of life in order.

We saw earlier today—the public may not be aware but one of the Speakers of the Legislature, the NDP member who's a Speaker, decided that he no longer felt comfortable being a Speaker of the Legislature and laid his coat down and left the position. I think he did it for very valid reasons. As I said before, I think Ontario is missing a golden opportunity and the issue that particularly troubled Mr Martin was our treatment of our most vulnerable people in Ontario.

Ontarians should be aware that while Ontario has been prosperous over the last five years, people on social assistance—and be aware that a single parent with two children is living on \$15,000 a year in this province; there are cabinet ministers who spend more than that on their holidays every year—have had no cost-of-living adjustment.

I just want to say on a personal note, I am very disturbed about the behaviour of the Minister of Community and Social Services. I've said this in the House before and I'll say it again: he is, in my opinion, stomping on our most vulnerable. He puts posters up in public buildings saying if you even suspect anyone on social assistance of fraud, turn them in; phone this number. We don't do that for tax evaders, we don't do that for any other members in our society, but you go into public buildings and John Baird has posters, essentially "Wanted" posters.

Recently, he held up a credit card—and it plays to misconceptions in the population. I realize a lot of people are concerned about abuse by people on social assistance, and all of us know we have to stamp that out. But he waves a credit card around in here as if this was a general problem with people on social assistance. He then held a meeting where he held up syringes and needles saying "We're going to randomly test people on social assistance," as if people on social assistance somehow or other had a drug problem far in excess of anyone else in society. He refuses to consider that these people have gone five years, often raising two or three children, with no increase. They're living on \$15,000 a year. I say to the Minister of Community and Social Services, the vulnerable in our society need an advocate. In my opinion, he daily stomps on the most vulnerable in our society. I frankly find it very disturbing. I've said that here before; I'll say it again. Somehow or other he has to come to grips with the fact that he is being—grossly unfair is an understatement.

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As we deal with this bill, let's recognize that what has driven the Ontario economy, without a question of a doubt, has been exports. The government produces a book that talks about why you should locate in Ontario. Why are companies locating in Ontario? It's because of our health care system. It's because of our education system. It's because of the quality of our workforce. It's because of the quality of our environment and the quality of life in our communities. Those are the very things that Harris has chosen, in this time of good economic times, to undermine.

Does anybody in this province think health care is in better shape today than when Mike Harris became Premier? Does anybody believe that? The first huge mistake Premier Harris made was to announce cuts for hospitals of 20%. He began implementing that within months of taking over. He undermined our hospital system. I remember nurses being laid off by the hundreds, and I remember his comment, "Well, it's too bad. They're just the same as Hula Hoop makers. Their time has come and gone." We now all know we are desperate to recruit nurses to come back to Ontario that Premier Harris drove away.

Does anybody believe our secondary schools are operating better now than they did five years ago? Frankly, they're in chaos. My leader, Dalton McGuinty, just a week ago proposed a plan that, in our opinion and in the opinion of school boards, parent groups, student groups, teacher groups, is at least a short-term solution to the chaos we're facing right now in our schools. But Premier Harris, because I think he needs total victory in all of his fights, is refusing to even consider it.

As I say, I always carry this around. When they're talking to communities outside, this is what it says here about Ontario's environment: "Ontario means beautiful, sparkling, shining waters." What have we done? The auditor pointed out that one of the early things Premier Harris did was to cut 25% of the inspection staff from the Ministry of the Environment. What were the results? The government itself acknowledges that at least half the water plants in Ontario didn't come close to meeting standards, that we've got problem after problem in Ontario. By the way, that's not the opposition speaking; that's the Provincial Auditor, who says, "Listen, this is a serious problem." The government decided they were going to cut 25%—here it is here. Since 1994, which is right around the time Harris became Premier, the inspection division has reduced its staff by 25%. This has meant a 34% decrease in the number of inspections conducted per year, and in 31% of the cases there were significant violations—not just violations, significant violations. I say to Ontario, the third area that I think is crucial to our quality of life the Premier has chosen to undermine.

The fourth area is the whole issue of housing. There has not been one single unit of housing built in Ontario in the last five years for people who require assistance, not one single unit. Those who know this area say we should

be seeing at least 15,000 rental units built per year. We're seeing none of the modest-income rental units built and a few, a dribble of high-rental units being built.

The fifth area is the whole issue of labour relations. Once again, the government, on time allocation without debate, will force through several bills on labour relations. Again, I go back to the government's own document. Here's what they say: "Ontario—exceptional workforce." They say, "The labour-management legal framework in Ontario is streamlined and balanced. Labour-management relations are constructive and stable. Bargaining is rooted in realism and a clear understanding of the competitive nature of the global economy. Contracts are settled without incident. According to the 1999 World Competitiveness Yearbook, business leaders ranked Canada's educational system ahead of Japan and the United States in terms of meeting the needs of a competitive economy."

It goes on to talk about what a terrific labour-management environment we have in Ontario, and now Premier Harris has turned his fine hand of bringing chaos out of order to this area. So we'll now see a dramatic shift in the balance between employees and employers, when the government itself said it was properly in balance, and we will see, tragically, unrest in the workforce.

One of the Toronto dailies on the weekend had an editorial—and I might say it's a Toronto daily that would traditionally be very supportive of the Harris government—saying, "You're going too far on this. You're undermining the relationships that exist in the workforce for no apparent advantage other than benefit to the employers and penalties to the employees."

I say to all of us, think about this. Think about five years ago. Our health care system is worse, our education system is in turmoil, our environment is under tremendous threat, and part of it, without question of a doubt, according to the Provincial Auditor, is as a result of the government cutting back on ministry staff. Housing is a crisis of growing significance. Labour-management relationships are about ready to be torn apart.

A test of Ontario society is, how do we deal with those most vulnerable in our society? We all, by the way, in our lives—all of us—periodically need a helping hand. I think the actions of Mr Baird—and I say again, I find it unacceptable that the minister, who should be speaking for and be the advocate of the most vulnerable, is choosing to play on the fears of people, choosing to demonize people on social assistance, rather than being the person who says, "Let's understand that the majority of people on social assistance are children." These are young people who, if there are two of them with one parent, live on \$15,000 a year. I repeat, there are members in this Legislature who spend more than that on holidays every year. We live here in an unreal—

Mr Dunlop: I don't.

Mr Phillips: The member says no. It's a matter of public record that members of this Legislature spend more than \$15,000 a year just on holidays.

In the last two weeks, my leader has raised the issue with the Premier several times that surely, at the very

least, at this time, we should be looking to provide some assistance. Frankly, I compliment Mr Martin, who took a stand today on that issue and who, as a matter of conscience, could not continue as the Speaker as a result of that.

On the issue of the golden opportunity missed, I heard some discussion last week on some of the financial matters. I use these numbers because many of us don't necessarily pay a lot of attention to it, and I think the public often are unaware of them.

I say, firstly, that Premier Harris has added \$24 billion of debt to the province of Ontario. We are spending every hour—listen to this—\$200,000 to pay the interest just on the debt that Premier Harris increased for the province.

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Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Every hour.

Mr Phillips: Every hour \$200,000, every single hour. The reason I raise that is because Premier Harris always loved to go after the previous government with numbers like that. Premier Harris has added \$24 billion to the debt of the province, according to his own numbers. We are spending \$200,000 hour after hour to pay the interest on that debt. That was always one of the issues. Would it have been better to do what Alberta did and what the federal government did and what Quebec did, which was to balance the budget before dramatic tax cuts?

For those who are interested in figures—this is over a 10-year period—today the net provincial debt as a percentage of GDP, which is one measurement—debt to GDP—is 28.7%; 10 years ago it was 14.2%. By the way, the number in Alberta is 11% and—this is always interesting—the number in British Columbia is 21.8%, in Manitoba is 20.7% and in Saskatchewan is 29%. The public debt interest as a percentage of revenue 10 years ago was 9.3%; today it's 15.1%. The expenditures as a percentage of GDP 10 years ago was 14.9%; today it's 15.6%.

I point those numbers out because a lot of my business friends simply assume, because the name "Conservative" is there, that Mike Harris must be a good money manager. I say, recognize—

Mr Gerretsen: Look at the auditor's report.

Mr Phillips: My colleague said, "Look at the auditor's report," and he's right about that. I'll just close off this thought, though. Remember this: Premier Harris has added \$24 billion of debt to the province, \$200,000 an hour, every single hour, 24 hours a day. This isn't just during—

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): Christmas Day.

Mr Phillips: Christmas Day it's \$200,000 an hour, says my friend from Cornwall.

The final point I'd make, because my other colleagues would like an opportunity to talk, is the Provincial Auditor's report. He produces a report for the taxpayers every year. He is the independent watchdog for Ontario taxpayers. He's the one who watches over government spending. He has a press availability after he issues his

report. The media this year said, "This report seems quite damaging. Are things getting worse?" The auditor said—he's now been the auditor eight years—his last two reports are the most damaging reports he has produced. Management of government money, of public money by the government, is getting worse. His eight years obviously include part of the NDP tenure.

I say to my business friends, recognize that the auditor is saying that things are getting worse, not better in terms of management of government money. He points out that Agricorp was spending money, frankly, illegally. He had to step in and catch them on it. The ambulance service that's being downloaded is going to cost more and, according to him, is probably going to work less well than it does now. The environment: as I pointed out earlier, cutting the staff has resulted in dramatically fewer inspections and, when an inspection does take place, much more serious problems.

So to all of us—once again, this bill is going to be forced through—I say we have spent five years and we've missed a golden opportunity. We had a chance to get our health care system, our education system, our environment, our housing, our labour relations in shape and we've missed it.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: Harris was focused on tax cuts to get re-elected. The debt went up and the problem grew and now, in those key areas, we have, rather than a better situation, a worse situation.

Finally, I think it is tragic that rather than a debate at a legislative committee where the public can have an opportunity to provide some input, we are dealing with another closure motion that will cut off the debate that should have taken place in a public forum.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join in the debate today. I want to speak about our colleges and universities and training programs, which were largely set out in the 1960s to meet the needs of that generation.

Since then there have been incremental changes to our system, but in today's challenging world that is not enough. Our world has changed dramatically and it is time that our system responded to that change.

That is why we have, firstly, introduced the first major reform of our apprenticeship system in more than 30 years and launched the single largest commitment to capital construction in our publicly funded colleges and universities in 30 years. This legislation continues that reform. The legislation that we're dealing with is Bill 132, which is the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Statute Law Amendment Act, 2000.

This government is responding directly to the needs of not only students but all Ontarians by proposing to give them the full range of flexible choices in post-secondary programming that have become commonplace in competing jurisdictions. As the member from Simcoe North knows, that's good news for Simcoe county and that's

good news for Georgian College, which is situated throughout the county, with its main campus in the city of Barrie.

I recognize that any change can be difficult for those who have grown accustomed to the old ways of doing things. However, I want to remind the members that our post-secondary and training system is not about our past. It is about preparing our students for the increasingly complex world in which they will graduate and build their lives.

That focus on the future, on seizing opportunities, was the thinking behind the establishment of our community colleges in the 1960s. That was the thinking that allowed the college system to grow from an idea to a mature system capable of responding to the needs of students and local communities. Our colleges and universities have gone so far, but under this outdated legislated framework things had to change.

With Bill 132 we are once again proposing to rekindle the spirit of innovation that produced a brand new set of post-secondary choices for our students, choices that will respond to their needs and their futures. Today those needs are different and we need the courage to move forward to refocus the system so that Ontarians have the opportunities throughout their lives to gain the skills and expertise they require to reach their full potential.

This is true not only for recent high school graduates going to colleges and universities for the first time; increasingly, Ontarians of all ages, many who have already earned a diploma or degree and now have full-time jobs, will also need learning opportunities available at times and places that are convenient for them.

This legislation recognizes the reality that all our students and workers face, and it would ensure that our post-secondary system is once again centred on the student and the learner, able to anticipate and respond to their changing environment needs.

If passed by the Legislature, this act would allow for, one, the expansion of student choices to include applied degrees at our community colleges, which is very good news to communities located in Simcoe county because Georgian College is there and it gives an opportunity for the students to stay within the community and not have to go outside of it; and two, the expansion of private degree-granting universities in Ontario.

I think these changes that are set out in post-secondary learning opportunities are of tremendous significance for communities which do not have universities but focus on their community colleges. Like Georgian College, they're going to benefit significantly from this legislation.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I'm indeed saddened to be here speaking again this evening on another time allocation motion.

The priorities of this government are certainly mixed up seriously. Priorities where they should be working to help people, priorities of making sure that issues such as poverty and homelessness are addressed, are not being addressed by this government. This government is fixated on tax cuts and fixated on trying to help those

who don't need the help as much. The individuals who need the help and the assistance are abandoned by this government. It's very sad that the most vulnerable have seen no increases, not even a cost-of-living increase in a disability pension or Ontario Works allowance.

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At the same time, the government proposes a 42% increase for us, which we were totally opposed to. At the same time, the government claws back child tax benefits, a government that I'm sure will claw back the heat subsidy that's going to be issued by the federal government in late January or early February; a government that has cut the environment of this province, and not only cut the Ministry of the Environment but they've cut the staff, the frontline workers who ensure that the environment is safe in this province. Those employees have been cut by this government.

Housing: we deal with the housing issue in this province, a serious problem not just in Toronto but all across this province. In my riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London, a report was prepared to look at Where's Home? Do you know how many units of new public housing had been built since this government came to power? Zero. Your government promised that the private sector was going to do it. The private sector isn't there for that. There is a role for government to play in people's lives. It's incumbent on us as elected officials to put people first and not always think of the upper echelons within this province.

Another area that this government has totally abandoned is the area of agriculture. It's extremely disturbing to look at the cuts that this government has put through on the Ministry of Agriculture: the cuts of closing down the agricultural offices, the cuts forcing people to travel a longer distance, the cuts forcing people to do their business by computer. There are parts of this province that do not have the ability to tap into the World Wide Web, yet this is the approach this government takes.

Let's look at the area of subsidies to farmers. This government—the minister spoke up many times for the farmers of Ontario, for them to get their fair share, and I compliment him on that, that he did ensure that the farmers of Ontario were getting a fair share from the federal government. But this minister and this government aren't giving the farmers of Ontario their fair share. When you look at other provinces, you look at Alberta, you look at Quebec, you look at the support they're giving to the agricultural community. That support is non-existent from this government.

Another area that we need to be concerned with: we've got one, maybe two days left in this Legislature. Where is the agricultural operations act? The Minister of the Environment has been consulting on this for over a year. Where is this legislation? This legislation is wanted by the farmers, it's wanted by municipalities, it's wanted by citizens in this province, and this government is hanging them all out to dry—extremely sad.

Post-secondary education: we had a demonstration here today. I can hear them outside right now debating and protesting Bill 132. But has this government supported post-secondary education? No, they haven't

supported post-secondary education. Ontario is now the most expensive place to gain a post-secondary education. We've seen our tuition costs rise by over 60% as a result of actions by this government. We've seen an over \$400-million cut to our post-secondary institutions in this province by this government. Is this government trying to invest in our future? No, not at all. They're piling more and more debt on students of this province, debt that it's going to take them years and years to get out of.

Another area where they've totally abandoned the students of this province is in the education sector. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party have put forth a good idea, a peace plan, to bring all sides to the table, to get on with getting our students back into the classrooms so they can enjoy those extracurricular activities. But could we get support from this government to look at this peace plan that Dalton McGuinty has put forward? No, not at all. This government is prepared to continue to do war with teachers, to continue to do war with school boards. But you know there are always casualties in a war and these are the casualties that this government has abandoned. These casualties are the students of this province. I think it's just shameful the way the Minister of Education has treated students in this province.

Another issue of extreme importance we've lost sight of is that with this government's fixation on tax cuts in this province, since they've been in power they have added \$24 billion in debt, including \$10 billion for tax cuts. Tax cuts are one thing, but by adding debt on to future generations like these pages in the House, you've abandoned these young people in this House and you've abandoned the future generations of this province by imposing on them unprecedented future debt responsibilities.

Let's just talk a little bit about downloading. I don't know how anybody from a municipal background can stand up and face a municipal politician because the downloading to municipalities has been unprecedented. You have not treated municipalities with any respect; you've treated them with total disdain. I think what you've done is shameful, and how any one of you who is a former municipal politician can sit over there and stand and face municipal politicians is beyond me. You've abandoned them.

Merry Christmas to the residents of Elgin-Middlesex-London.

Mr Dunlop: It's a pleasure to speak this afternoon on the time allocation motion on Bill 152, the Balanced Budgets For Brighter Futures Act, and yes, we do have a bright future in this province.

I was talking earlier today to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and he gave me a brochure from the Ontario Mining Association. I hear all the discussion on the other side of the House that most of our economy is built on the American economy and the automotive industry. That's what you try to say but—

Mr Gerretsen: Well, it's true, isn't it? Is it true?

Mr Dunlop: No, it's not true. I'm going to read a statement from the Ontario Mining Association. I'd like to read this into the Hansard:

"Perhaps because of the nature of the commodity business, miners are people who patiently wait for better times. They're used to the swings in prices and the vagaries of business cycles. Yet, even when the better times do arrive, miners remain cautious and sometimes even suspicious. While good times are anxiously anticipated, when they do arrive, they are regarded with trepidation.

"So without raising any fears—or hopes—let's look at some of the things going on in the industry in Ontario during 2000. Earlier this year, Agrium Inc held the official opening of its phosphate mine near Kapuskasing in northeastern Ontario. The capital investment in this project in Ontario was \$75 million. On October 19, Goldcorp held the official opening of its Red Lake mine. This gold producer invested US\$56 million in a mine and mill expansion and has committed another US\$20 million.

"Along with these mine openings, several companies made announcements of significant investments in Ontario. They included Falconbridge investing \$640 million in its Kidd Creek operation in Timmins; North American Palladium spending US\$126.5 million to upgrade and expand its Lac des Iles mine; Inco investing \$116 million in its Sudbury area mines combined with exploration being at its highest level since the 1970s; and Barrick Gold investing \$1.7 million to expand the mill at the Holt-McDermott mine.

"Also, Kenora Granite Company Ltd is putting \$4.5 million into a dimension stone quarry near Ear Falls and De Beers holds the prospect of a diamond mine near Attawapiskat on James Bay.

"Then we need to look at a provincial government that is striving to make Ontario a preferred destination for mineral investment dollars. In its budget this year, the government reduced the mining tax to 10% from 20% over a five-year period, offered a 10-year exemption from mining tax for new remote mines and lowered the overall corporate tax rate to put Ontario on a more competitive footing with other jurisdictions. Through its Operation Treasure Hunt, the provincial government is bringing new geological data to light and it is investing in developing geoscientific information in advanced technologies.

1700

"Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines is striving to rehabilitate old mine sites and is increasing funding for the northern Ontario heritage fund. The government made true on its word on tax cuts to the mining industry going back to when elected in 1995. In addition, it is implementing a flow-through share incentive plan of its own and it has encouraged Ottawa to do the same. These actions are making investing in the exploration end of the business more attractive.

"When things improve, good fortune is not shared equally and mining is a sector with more work to do and more problems to solve. However, without wishing to jinx the apparent trend, perhaps we should ... let these constructive actions by companies and governments

speak for themselves." I think that sums up the "brighter futures" aspect of this bill.

This government has put forth 166 tax cuts since 1995, and by the end of this year we will have increased revenues \$14 billion. That compares, I might add, to the 32 tax increases that the New Democratic Party put in and the 33 tax increases that the Liberal Party put in, and you didn't increase revenues at all.

As far as I'm concerned, I stand firmly behind this bill. I stand firmly behind Minister Eves and his job as finance minister of this province. I think everybody in this House should support this bill.

With only four minutes left, I'd like to leave a little bit of time for the member for Durham, who would also like to make a few comments on this bill. Thank you very much. The same as the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, I want to wish everybody in this House and the people of Simcoe North a very merry Christmas and all the best in the new year.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this time allocation motion that, again, brings down closure on a significant bill. It really has become routine around here that these sorts of things happen.

I can recall just last week, on second reading during our lead-off, saying to this House how there wasn't much chance that the current boom was going to continue and that a lot of the observations and measurements the government wants to take now are not going to hold for the foreseeable future.

It was with interest that I noted today—more than interest; worry, especially since the corporation in question is a mainstay of the Hamilton economy. Today's *Financial Post*—because I made the argument the last time that this wasn't just me, it wasn't just the NDP; that there were serious indicators that suggest we're heading for a downturn. We have been saying that the economic platform of this government has worked in the short term solely, in our opinion, because of the momentum built from the American economy, and that our numbers—GDP, job creation, it doesn't matter what you want to look at—those things would have been there anyway. I think, and we believe, that the proof in the pudding, if you will, will be when a recession unfortunately does hit. It will remove the façade of your argument that it's your policies that are creating the North American boom that Ontario is a part of.

You've been really quick all along to take credit, saying, "Oh, no, we disagree with you. We disagree with you, Christopherson. The NDP got it all wrong. It's not because of the North American economy. It's not because of the direct relationship between the American auto industry and the auto industry here in Ontario in terms of its horsepower within our economy. Oh no, that's not it; it's because of our policies." Of course, we've maintained all along, what possible difference could it make to an ordinary, middle-class, working family that lives in Wisconsin with regard to your tax cuts? Whether they buy a new vehicle or not is what

sends the message back here: increase production, increase productivity, hire more people. That goes for the direct assembly, the supply market, the after market and the direct service market of new vehicles.

What will be interesting is that when the cover is ripped off all of this and you're exposed, and you will be—

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Keep hoping.

Mr Christopherson: I'm not hoping, as the minister says. I resent the fact that he would suggest that.

The Deputy Speaker: Through the Speaker, please.

Mr Christopherson: Through you, Speaker, I resent that he said that. The fact of the matter is that it is going to happen. It will be interesting to see. As I say, once the veil has been lifted and we get a look at what's left of the real fundamentals that affect the quality of life in Ontario, then we will see them in all their starkness. The question is going to be whether or not this government is going to stand up and say, "Yes, it is our fault; we take responsibility."

You wanted to take all the credit even though nobody suggested you deserve it. You were foolish enough, in my opinion, politically speaking, arrogant enough, in my analysis, to say, "We, the Tories, caused all this. It's all because we were here. If we weren't here, none of this would have happened." That's been your position all along. When the bottom falls out, let's see if the appropriate ministers, the Premier himself and the know-it-all backbenchers who sit deep in the Tory backbenches are prepared to stand up and say, "Yes, we took the credit when things were good, especially since it really wasn't our doing, and now I'm prepared to stand here and be all grown up and adult and very mature and take responsibility for the fact that we are into major serious times and innocent people are being hurt." It's not going to happen.

What is going to happen is that at some point the unveiling is going to happen. Earlier I was indicating I wanted to reference today's paper. I know well the minister who commented. Given the fact that this is a Hamilton corporation I'm talking about, I know he would be aware that it brings me no joy to read this kind of headline, given the implications for my community. Here it is nonetheless, the *Financial Post*, Tuesday, December 19, "Dofasco's Profit Meltdown." Then, inside on page 3, "Gillette Slashes Workforce to Trim Operating Costs: Sales Slump, Costs Rise." Page 4 in the Canada section, "Union Fears St Thérèse a GM Target: Report Automaker to Slash Product Lineup by 20%."

Lest we think that somehow the *Financial Post* has become a leftwing fearmonger, the business section of today's *Toronto Star* has, "Buyers Market Drives the Auto Lot," and the subheadline is, "Automakers Scramble to Offer Best Incentives." Why? Because people aren't buying. Cars aren't moving. It is deadly serious for us.

I think it is fair to say that whether or not these headlines and the indicators we've been seeing over the last few weeks and few months, particularly if you watch the

stock market and its volatility and what is happening in the high-tech sector of the economy both here in Canada and in the United States—there are reasons to be concerned.

I want to tie this into the comments of Mr Young, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, who is also the member from Willowdale. He said earlier today—he was making a reference to last year's pre-budget consultation. I link these two by way of this: if we get into recessionary times, people are reading and hearing analysts and economic pundits on TV trying to decide—and they're talking more and more like it will—will it be a soft landing or a hard landing? And I guess they've got a new one in there now: will it be just a bumpy landing? We're getting more categories as time goes on. They mean it primarily in terms of what is going to happen to the markets. That is always the be-all and end-all gauge.

1710

In large part, whether you have a hard or a soft landing will be determined by what your bottom line shows when you're mailed out your mutual fund or stock option balances. Whatever investment tool you're using, it'll be that bottom line. It'll be a hard landing if you lose more than you wanted to. It'll be a soft landing, I guess, if what was lost is sort of OK because you're in for the long term, or the "it could have been worse" sort of approach.

But there's a huge difference between a hard landing when you're one of those earning better than \$300,000 a year. When you're in that category, this budget alone gives you about another 10 grand. That's on top of the tens of thousands of dollars they've already received. So a hard landing for those individuals is going to be a world of difference from the hard landing of some of those auto workers who are being notified they may be laid off, or somebody who hasn't yet benefited. I don't know how we describe the feeling of someone who's already in poverty, if we go into a recession, in terms of what a hard landing means for them.

I know this government doesn't like to pay any attention to those who are not part of this boom. You like to say that everybody who's working is somehow sharing in this boom. But that's not the case. I grant you that jobs were created. I grant you that during an economic boom it is inevitable that you will create jobs. Whether you'd reach the same or higher levels with this policy or different policies, of course, remains the focus of debate for us. But it's a given that new jobs will be added to the economy. Guess what? When you're in a recession, the opposite happens. Jobs disappear, the economy contracts. If you're someone who has already been left out of the gift-giving—and that's the majority of people, by the way—you have every reason to be terrified of a hard landing.

My friend Tony Martin from Sault Ste Marie made a very important decision for himself today and performed a dramatic exercise of his rights when he stepped down, resigned as a Deputy Speaker and has now moved across the street and is presiding over what is being called a

people's parliament, talking about poverty issues, talking about real issues that reflect the lifestyle of real people and pointing out why their situation has been made worse by this government.

I applaud Tony Martin for that. Many of you in this House will know that Tony is a member and a long-time activist in the Catholic church. His faith is very important to him. His religion is a big part of his life and his values, and those of his family.

Before he came here in 1990, he was the director of a food bank.

I just heard the Minister of Transportation mumble under his breath, "Well, that explains a lot." You're right, it does. Arguably, he brings more compassion, more love and more awareness of poverty issues than just about anyone else in this place. Maybe there are a few other people who could come close to matching his life experience; however, I would say to you with a great deal of humbleness that in our caucus I think he has a greater understanding and depth of feeling about the issue of poverty than the rest. That's not to say we don't care or that other members of this House don't care, but this is something Tony feels in every fibre of his body.

I won't go into the details—and people will understand why I'm respecting Tony's privacy—but I can tell you it was very moving when he came to a special caucus meeting late last week to tell us of his decision. My point in raising that is that Tony Martin, the MPP for Sault Ste Marie, felt he had to do something, that he personally was not putting enough of who he is and using his position as a member of this Legislature to draw attention to the issues of poverty and, more important, try to create a dynamic where there is discussion of how to alleviate and eliminate poverty.

Rather than being cynical, and it's easy to be cynical when any of us do anything in this place, I suggest that we take a very hard look at the individual we're talking about and his background and the position he has taken. If you read his Hansard over the last decade, you will see that today should come as no surprise to any of us. This is about Tony returning to his roots. He listened to his soul, and his soul told him that he needed to do more. That's not an easy thing to conclude, especially when you're a member of the third party. There aren't a lot of levers of power and authority, or even influence, for that matter. Yet I think he has found a way. Certainly I expect there will be a great deal of media attention this evening, as there ought to be, and that was his whole point: we aren't dealing with this enough. You never hear the government backbenchers talk about it. The best they'll come up with is, "Yes, poverty is a challenge, especially child poverty, and we need to do more. The job's not done. We need to do more." That's it. That's as far as they go, and I'm sure if we had a look at the briefing notes they all use, you'll find that line in there. If things get too hot or they get an issue of poverty thrown at them, particularly child poverty, this is where they go. But you don't hear many government backbenchers in particular talk about poverty in their communities.

I raise all this in the context of a budget bill and a debate around the budget, because there are a lot of people who are not yet in poverty but they're on the brink, whether that's because their job is questionable—uncertain in terms of its future—or whether they're one of those who are paying more than 50% of their income for rent—and let's remind ourselves that you eliminated rent control, so you've got to bear some responsibility for that. There are seniors who are making decisions every day about whether they buy food or medicine.

Is it expensive to solve that problem? Yes. Is it expensive to solve the homeless problem? Yes. But you found \$4 billion during the life of this budget to give to the wealthiest corporations and the wealthiest individuals of Ontario. You found \$4 billion to give them and turned your back on everyone else.

1720

Let someone think they can't be in this category, be laid off for six, eight, 10, 12, 15 months. Remember the social safety net that we were all so proud of, especially those people around my age? It doesn't exist any more like it used to. Why? Because this government had to cut hundreds of millions of dollars out of the Ministry of Community and Social Services to help pay for those tax cuts that you gave to the wealthy. It's not just wrong, it's obscene.

Economically it didn't even make any sense. You had to borrow the money to give the tax cuts because you didn't put that money, that revenue, toward the deficit. If you had, you would have balanced the budget sooner and you wouldn't have had to tear the heart out of the social safety net in this province.

In terms of health care, what do we hear now from the right, the hard right wing in this province and in this country? Two-tier health care. Listen—it has been said many times; it can't be said often enough—if you've got enough money, a two-tier health care system makes a whole lot of sense. Why not? Common sense, financial sense, any way you want to do it, it makes a great deal of sense. Where it doesn't make sense is for the average, working, middle-class family; it makes no sense. But as long as you keep saying tax cuts are the answer for everything and you get enough people willing to believe you, that will be the order of the day.

But if this recession comes and we get the hard landing, how do the tax cuts help support our quality of life in Ontario when the recession hits? How? What is the sustainability of that? What does that do in the long run? You can argue today because of the numbers—falsely, I submit, but you can at least argue, and you do. You stand up and every good thing that's going on you say is because of the tax cuts. Given the dynamic of what's out there, you can do that. That doesn't make it true. That doesn't make it true just because you say so. It doesn't make it untrue just because I say so. But the reality is that you are saying that everything is wonderful because of our tax cuts and without those we wouldn't have this. You know how we feel about that. If we're in a recession, how do you even begin to argue that tax cuts are

going to solve the problem or that they've been good for us as a population in the long run? How do you do that? I don't believe you can, because I'll tell you what's going to happen, absolutely guaranteed. When more and more major cracks and gaps happen in the health care system and in the education system as a result of the money you've already taken out to pay for your obscene tax cuts, your gift for the very wealthy, and because those systems are already so fragile and beginning to crack under the pressure that's being placed on them, you're going to say, when we're in a recessionary time, "We can't afford to do anything." Whether you want to or not—it'll be interesting to say whether you want to—you've got legislation now that says there has to be a balanced budget. Oh, you've set up a safety valve, if you will, but we have to be almost in a depression before you hit that safety valve.

At the lowest point in the recession of the 1990s, which was the worst recession since the Dirty Thirties, the depression of the 1930s, your legislation—I think if it kicked in at all, it was one year. I think it may not have kicked in at all, but at best it kicked in one year. I don't think it did. So first of all, they're going to say, "We can't go into a deficit position, so we don't have any money to inject into the health care system or into the education system or into the rising number of people who are no longer on EI and are having to turn to welfare." All those things you said no to in the good times are going to get a no with a stamp and packaging and a bow on top of it, because now you've got the greatest excuse for a Conservative politician, and that is, "We can't afford it; we're in a recession."

We've said to you consistently that you had an opportunity to advance the province so that more people could benefit from this boom, but we also said that you have an opportunity here to invest in the future because the down days, the recession days, are going to happen at some point, and you sure aren't going to spend any money in a recession that you wouldn't spend during the boom. So what you will have done is squandered—absolutely squandered—a magnificent opportunity that comes along once in a generation, if then, where you have a record-setting economic boom. You had such an opportunity to do so much, and yes, that would have included balancing the budget.

I remind the Tories that the first province in Canada in the modern economic era to balance their budget was not a Tory. It wasn't a Liberal. It was an NDP government under Roy Romanow in Saskatchewan. Now, isn't it interesting that Saskatchewan also happens to be the province that created universal health care? It's interesting that Tommy Douglas—if I'm getting this correctly, because it wasn't part of my notes, but if I'm remembering correctly—was either the first or within the first group of people inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame. Tommy Douglas, who had doctors out in the streets protesting that there was a Communist takeover of the health care system going on in Saskatchewan. They went on strike, they had committees in the com-

munity, they had everybody going wild. Tommy Douglas.

What's interesting about this story, aside from a great brag story for the NDP, is, number one, it points out how there is a direct relationship between good fiscal management, balanced budgets and the quality of life of the majority of people. There's a direct link. I don't think anything that we have said or done as NDP goes against that, and if it does in any small way—because no government's perfect—it's not near what you have done: the obscenity of taking all that billions of dollars and giving it to those who don't need it, or need it least of all.

1730

Tommy Douglas. Tommy Douglas was the Premier of Saskatchewan for almost 16 years. Do you know that it wasn't until near the end of his 16th year—I think it was around year 14 or 15, right near the end because part of it was still continuing after he'd actually left—toward the end of that lengthy career and term as Premier, and you ask, why would I raise that? I'll tell you why: because Tommy Douglas was under enormous pressure from the activists and from members of his party—then known as the CCF, the forerunner to the NDP—to bring in universal health care. He'd made it a huge issue, he'd said it was so close to his heart, and they kept saying, "Tommy, why won't you do it? You've got a majority government. Do it." Do you know what his answer was? He said he wasn't going to bring it in until it was on a sound program basis, in other words, until it had been thought through, because much was at risk. If he had failed, we would have had a great deal of difficulty pressuring the then Liberals in a minority situation to bring it in federally. There's no other model. This was creating something brand new, and look at what a wonderful thing they brought into our nation.

The second thing Tommy said was, "We have to be able to afford it, because I don't want future governments coming in and using the excuse of the financial viability of universal health care to eliminate it." He didn't want that excuse to be available to the Tories, to the right-wingers, to many Liberals; he didn't want that.

He also said he didn't want to make the banks rich off Saskatchewan's health care system.

So, you see, you don't have a monopoly on good fiscal management or its priority in our lives. I say to the members opposite, the numbers in and of themselves are not the story. They're not the end. They're not the reason. They're the means. You could have taken \$4 billion and you could have lowered tuition. You could have brought in a provincial housing program to start actually producing housing that, once it's paid for, belongs to the people of Ontario for as long as the stock is there, so that it can be used by people when they need it. When they're able to stand on their own they can move and then it's there for the next group that needs it. If someone is in a working middle-class lifestyle and they start to fall, then there is that net there and it also acts as a bit of a bounce to get them back. Eliminating the net or creating all kinds of holes does one thing only: it guarantees that people

who need it are going to fall right through and hit the pavement.

You could have done something about the crisis in our health care system. You've got enough money. Where's the money for community health? You cut it out of the institutional side. You were told you had to reinvest it there and, if you didn't, you'd have a crisis, and that's exactly what we've seen: crisis after crisis.

You could have invested more money in our universities. We were once the pride of the nation and beyond. Now our universities are crumbling because you've cut and cut to pay for your tax cut. What does that do for the future? What good is that tax cut? You can't even argue that it's creating jobs, because that myth is blown away when you're in a recession. What ongoing, sustainable benefits do huge tax cuts to the rich do for the vast majority, particularly during recessionary times? Nothing. I hate using slogans, but I've got to tell you that at the end of the day all that does is make the rich richer. For those already in poverty, it makes them poorer. For those who are not in poverty but are not rich, they aren't going in the rich direction, they're going in the other direction. It's all about quality of life. It's all about sustainability. It's about building. At least it's supposed to be, but under this government and this kind of budget and this kind of legislation, it's about greed. Pure and simple, it's greed.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my privilege to speak on this time allocation motion on Bill 152. It's clear this motion is necessary to make sure the minister's statement is approved, passed and voted on. I want to bring it down from the member from Hamilton West and the pessimistic notes. If you want to look at what they did to this province in doubling the debt and the deficit, they can't lecture. They've got to look at the facts. If you look at the increase in revenue, the increase in expenditures in high-priority areas like health care, the whole concept of trying to help people to help themselves is quite foreign to the member.

I think we should all, at this time of year, take a few moments and realize just how well off we are, and I don't mean this in any partisan way.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Toole: I'm going to read an e-mail that was sent to me by a constituent. Her name is Suzanne Elston. It was sent to me as a Christmas reminder and I thank her for it. These are quotes:

"Below is a reminder of the de facto aristocracy of the planet. Think of our era as the 1890s in France.

"If you feel a little 'down' over the holidays, a few facts to ponder:

"If you have food in the fridge, clothes on your back, a roof over your head, and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of" the people who inhabit "the world.

"If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and a little spare change lying in a dish somewhere, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

"If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than millions of people who will not survive this week.

"If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 500 million people in the world."

The point here is we on all sides really do want the best, but I think the most important thing is, when do we stop demanding from society?

Mr Christopherson: For the rich, never.

Mr O'Toole: The member from Hamilton West and his party had five years of government and they absolutely destroyed the fundamentals of this province.

I spoke the other week on a few issues, and with the limited time that is left to me, one of the key areas is health care. The investments in health care are clearly outlined in our budget document. If people want to call, I'd certainly send them one, Budget 2000. Changes to the expenditures in health care, no thanks to the federal government: from just over \$17 billion to close to \$23 billion. That's just one area.

The improvements in health care have been commented on by many. Cal Stiller, chair of the Canadian Medical Discoveries Fund: "The creation of the Ontario research and development challenge fund and the Ontario Innovation Trust have launched a new era of exploration and excitement in both public and private research communities here in Ontario."

We're building an infrastructure to have a stronger Ontario for all Ontarians. With that, I wish everyone the very best.

1740

Mr Gerretsen: I guess the Conservative members just don't get it. Some people are doing quite well in this province, no question about it, but we're talking about, on this side of the House, the people who aren't doing so well.

The one thing that has really disturbed me over the last two or three weeks is that whenever a question was asked either of the Premier or of the Minister of Community and Social Services about those 100,000 children who still live in abject poverty in this province, and what was the government going to do about that—was the government actually going to give them a cost-of-living increase as far as their social assistance payments are concerned? After all, they have been the same for the last five years, after suffering a 21% cut back in 1995. What was the government going to do about it? Very, very legitimate questions. What did the Minister and the Premier say about that situation, about the fact that there are still people who are suffering on a day-to-day basis, including the 100,000 children who are living in poverty? They basically ignored it. They didn't answer the question.

They told us how wonderfully everybody else is doing, and that was all that mattered. But no matter how well most people in this province may be doing, there is still a significant number of people, adults and children, out there who aren't doing so well for whom this will not be a merry Christmas.

It has always seemed to me that if we regard ourselves as a compassionate, caring society, the way we want to be portrayed to the outside world, the way we are regarded as the best country in the world to live as far as quality of life is concerned, then we should also care just as much about the most vulnerable in our society.

Whether those most vulnerable are children living in poverty with their families or whether they are senior citizens who cannot get the necessary medical prescriptions or medical care in hospitals or cannot get community health care, we should be concerned about those people. It is not good enough to simply say, "Well, everybody else is doing all right and everybody else is doing great." Let us care about those people who aren't doing so great. That's really what government should be all about. Government should be about caring for those individuals who, for whatever reason, cannot make it in life the way you and I perhaps are fortunate enough to make it. Surely we owe that to the 100,000 children who live in poverty. Surely we owe that to the seniors in this province. That's been the argument on this side of the House.

That is what has been totally denied by anyone in cabinet whom these particular questions have been addressed to over the last two weeks. I find that offensive, because I have never been involved in any government structure in my 25 years of involvement in public life where we simply do not care about a significant number of people in our society. If the government does care, then at least answer our questions on those kinds of issues, which has been completely and totally lacking.

It doesn't just end there. We heard today that this government has trampled upon the democratic process 64 times; 64 times in the last five years you have invoked closure, cutting off debate on bills large and small. You simply didn't want to hear any more.

It's kind of interesting: I did a little survey and determined how often closure was invoked in the 128 years prior to that, since we started in 1867. Do you know how often it was invoked prior to that? A total of 30 times in 128 years. In the last five years this government has invoked closure 64 times. That tells me something about how they feel about our democratic process.

The other thing, and the member from Hamilton West talked about this earlier: we talked about the provincial debt in this province. This government likes to pride itself on the management with which it looks after the affairs of state. Yet it's very interesting that when you look at the reports of the Provincial Auditor for the last two years running, he emphatically states that those have been two of the most damning reports he has ever had to issue in his role of Provincial Auditor, which basically deals with whether or not the money that the government spends on various programs has been spent in a cost-efficient and an effective manner. As far as the auditor is concerned, in ministry after ministry there has been waste, there has been mismanagement. We've gone through all that on a number of occasions in the past.

I would just say to this government, there are real problems out there in education. Take a look at the education peace plan that my leader, Dalton McGuinty, has come up with. It's been hailed throughout the province by teacher groups, by editorialists—

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): The OSSTF.

Mr Gerretsen: I don't care whether it's the OSSTF or not. It's a plan that's out there. You're always criticizing us for not coming up with a positive plan. Here's a positive plan, and what do you do with it? "Oh, it's not really your plan at all." You ridicule it, and that's exactly what you're like.

Secondly, take a look at the health care system if you really think everything is all that well in this province. When you look at the waiting lists, when you look at the lack of community health care services, there are still major problems in this province. Particularly in this time when we all like to enjoy the holiday spirit, let us never, ever forget the most vulnerable people in our society. We as a government have the duty and an obligation to protect them and to see that they're well looked after.

The Deputy Speaker: The time allocated for debate has now concluded.

Mr Klees has moved government notice of motion number 90. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1748 to 1758.

The Deputy Speaker: Those in favour please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John	Young, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Cleary, John C.	Kennedy, Gerard
Bartolucci, Rick	Conway, Sean G.	McMeekin, Ted
Bountrogianni, Marie	Crozier, Bruce	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Pupatello, Sandra
Bryant, Michael	Gerretsen, John	Ramsay, David
Caplan, David	Gravelle, Michael	Sergio, Mario
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 51; the nays are 21.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguee aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister of Correctional Services, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre des Services correctionnels leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Rob (PC)
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
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Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
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Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
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Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Government
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First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

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Tuesday 19 December 2000

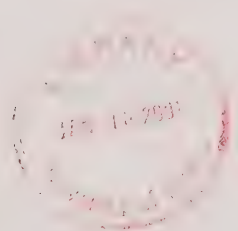
Mardi 19 décembre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 décembre 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI

Mr Klees, on behalf of Mr Stockwell, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 147, An Act to revise the law related to employment standards / Projet de loi 147, Loi portant révision du droit relatif aux normes d'emploi.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): Mr Speaker, I would ask consent to yield the floor to my colleague from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there consent? Agreed.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'll be sharing my time with the member from Niagara Falls.

I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to Bill 147, the Employment Standards Act, 2000. The Employment Standards Act has been around for a long time. The Employment Standards Act fundamentally sets out the minimum standards for employment in this province. It deals with a number of standards. It deals with hours of work, overtime, hours of work in a day, statutory holidays, termination pay, severance pay, the basic standards that affect, in essence, non-union employees throughout the province in terms of the minimum standards that they would achieve as opposed to those employees covered by a collective agreement which may have benefits that are in excess of those standards with respect to the basics. This bill deals with a number of areas. It deals with hours of work, overtime, vacation pay and public holidays. It also is bringing amendments to parental leave, introducing a new family crisis leave.

Because this is complaint-driven legislation the enforcement is by employment standards officers through the Ministry of Labour. The employment standards officers have the mandate to investigate the complaints and bring those complaints to fruition, be it through an order to pay on the employer for having breached the standards or deciding that no order will be issued. So employment standards officers under the legislation have very broad powers. They have the power to compile the information that's necessary to investigate a complaint,

which will enable them to make a decision. They have decision-making powers and they have an obligation to make their decision in a fair manner and to provide both parties to the complaint with due process before they make that decision. Their obligations with respect to enforcement of the legislation have been significantly enhanced in terms of the powers they have to ensure that an employer who's being investigated complies with providing the necessary documentation, providing the information, be it through witnesses and whatever is necessary, to make that decision

1850

There's increased authority for employment standards officers to issue notices of penalty and compliance and reinstatement orders, because when you deal with some of the most fundamental rights under the legislation, for example, maternity and paternity leave, if there's a violation of that, they have the power to reinstate the employee and also to issue penalties and to make sure the employee is made whole in terms of what they may have lost in compensation.

They're also looking at increasing maximum court-ordered fines for offending corporations from the current \$50,000. The first offence would be \$100,000, the second offence would be \$250,000 and the third offence would be \$500,000. It's somewhat similar in terms of the measures that have to be taken to ensure compliance, for example, under the Occupational Health and Safety Act where there are very steep fines with respect to employers who do not comply with the legislation.

The court-ordered fines for an individual would remain at \$50,000 with increased jail terms of up to one year. There is a requirement for employers to post in the workplace Ministry of Labour-supplied information on employees' rights and responsibilities. That's very important in terms of employees who are in non-union workplaces, who don't have representation, that they know their rights under the legislation and they also know where to go to enforce those rights, be it a local Ministry of Labour office within the community that has an employment standards operation as part of that Ministry of Labour office so they can get the information that's necessary to make sure they understand what their rights are with respect to any of the standards that are set out in the legislation.

The proposed bill will implement the Blueprint commitments for flexible work arrangements and unpaid family crisis leave, extend parental leave to respond to changes in the parental benefits in the federal Employment Insurance Act and modernize and clarify the Em-

ployment Standards Act to make it easier to understand and use.

With respect to hours of work, employees would keep the right to refuse to work more than 48 hours in a week and would still receive overtime after 44 hours in a week. Obviously an employer can improve upon those standards if that's a part of the relationship or the employment contract that employer wants to enter into with each and every one of those individuals if it's a non-union workplace or, if it's a collective agreement through a union, to provide better standards than are provided under the act, because we've got to remember these are minimum standards.

The new minimum daily and weekly rest periods are protected by law for the first time ever: 11 consecutive hours per day, 24 in every seven days or 48 in every 14 days in terms of minimum daily and weekly rest periods between working.

There have always been averaging arrangements under the Employment Standards Act with respect to overtime, but those had to be obtained through permit from the director of the employment standards branch. Or if you were in an industry—for example, the construction industry, road building—where the regulations provided for different terms of when overtime would apply, there have always been provisions there to extend the work-week and deal with overtime averaging when you're dealing with situations where it's an emergency situation for the employer or in a situation where there are perishable goods involved, where that work has to be done.

Overtime averaging is not something that's new; it is something that is allowed under the current act. The proposed bill would simplify the process. Specifically, employees and employers could agree in writing to average overtime hours over up to four weeks, and employees could take time off instead of overtime, if their employer agreed.

That's a fundamental thing in terms of flexibility in the workplace. Let's face it, you could say in fairness that a lot of employers allow in lieu time instead of paying overtime. That is something that has evolved in practice with respect to employers out there and the arrangement that an employee would be prepared to take. It makes sense to give the employer and the employees that option, to be able to take overtime and not be paid for it but to receive in lieu time with respect to the overtime. I think that's fairness, because you should give the option with respect to being paid and/or receiving in lieu time. That's something that I would say brings reality to the workplace and takes over from the restrictions, which are very arbitrary and really don't make a lot of sense in the workplace.

You're going to see a number of operations that would benefit from that flexibility with respect to overtime averaging. A lot of them would be based on the type of industry they're in and the type of season they would be in. If you're dealing with production—poultry or turkey farms—you'll find that their peak seasons are around the

holidays, where they would be working around the clock to make sure that the production meets the demand out there. This gives them flexibility to work with their employees, especially in terms of their busy times, and allows them, when there are slow times, to be able to implement this overtime averaging. It just makes common sense for that to come about.

You may find that also happening in the service industry. Where you're dealing with certain peak periods, that would be to the benefit of the employer and the employee. What we're talking about here is flexibility—flexibility to have control over your own life, control over your own work life. That's what is set out here. It doesn't take away from those minimum standards that have been set out in terms of hours of work per week or when you would receive overtime. It just allows for that flexibility for a business to survive, for an employee to benefit from a peak season for the employer and to balance it off when they would be facing slower times; maybe avoid layoffs or be able to take extra time for what is necessary or to take that in lieu time.

The other areas that are affected are vacation and public holidays. Employers would continue to be required to schedule vacations in minimum two- or one-week blocks. Employees could now request to take vacation in daily increments. That makes a lot of sense. If the employer has the flexibility and if the employee has the need to schedule their vacation at that time, be it for whatever purpose, certainly that could be something that employees could consider in terms of whether they needed to deal with something on a personal basis and it's a one-day thing or a two-day thing. They could use their vacation time to make sure that they're still paid and be able to take off to deal with whatever personal issues they face.

I think that flexibility is important, and to limit it to a minimum of two- and one-week blocks takes away the flexibility that's needed in this day and age.

All employees, including part-time, would be entitled to public holidays and pro-rated pay for a public holiday. To qualify for holidays employees must work the regularly scheduled day before and after the holiday and work the actual holiday, if previously agreed to. If an employee works the holiday, they could agree to either work for regular pay plus another day off with holiday pay, or work at time and a half plus the holiday. That gives them flexibility in determining, "If I have to work that holiday, I want to be paid either the base of what I would normally make that day plus time and a half or get the regular pay but be able to take another day off with holiday pay." It gives them an opportunity to supplement the arrangement with respect to holiday pay, either by taking another day off because they worked that holiday or getting time and a half plus the holiday pay for that particular arrangement.

1900

Parental leave is obviously very fundamentally important for people who desire to raise a family or have a family. They need that balance to be able to deal with the

situation. The federal government has increased the entitlement period that you can collect employment insurance benefits up to 52 weeks. It's the Employment Standards Act that has to complement that. It's the Employment Standards Act that allows for that time to be taken off and not lose your job and to make sure that period of time is set out to match the federal employment insurance benefits. Otherwise, it doesn't make a lot of sense to be providing federal employment insurance benefits for parental leave for a certain period of time if the province doesn't match it to make sure there's job protection for that entire period.

For parents whose child was born or came into their care on or after December 31, 2000, job-protected parental leave would increase to 35 weeks for women who also take pregnancy leave and 37 weeks for all other new parents. This change will enable new parents to access the 35 weeks of employment insurance benefits.

Another very new provision which I heard a lot of in my community in terms of having flexibility is family crisis leave. The emergency leave would provide up to 10 unpaid days a year of job-protected leave for recognized family and medical reasons for employees in workplaces of 50 or more employees. This family crisis leave has a number of features. It allows the flexibility to take up to 10 unpaid days. It doesn't mean you have to take it—it's a decision of the employee in terms of whether they want to take it—but it also provides that if the employee wants to take that leave, their job is protected and it gives them the flexibility to deal with family and medical reasons. Obviously, it's unpaid, but that doesn't stop employers in their arrangement with employees where the employee says, "I want to take my family leave." They may have an arrangement with respect to the employer that they may wish to take their vacation time to supplement that because the new changes in the legislation allow for that; or they may have some kind of benefit or compensation arrangement that allows for them to provide a buffer so it really isn't an unpaid leave. But the key to this is that it allows 10 days of unpaid family crisis leave for family or for medical reasons, and the job is protected. It takes away the discretion of the employer. If they say, "We don't want to give you that time off to deal with that family concern," or for a medical situation, it allows the employee some real flexibility and, I think, fundamental rights that all employees are looking for to deal with their family situations.

When you look at this legislation, there are some fundamental changes that you're seeing with respect to hours of work, but it's within the control of the employee. It's not mandatory. It's strictly a voluntary arrangement. The employee has the say with respect to dealing with the situation. I think what's also important is the repeal of the One Day's Rest in Seven Act. There are daily and weekly rest provisions—daily, 11 hours' rest in a 24-hour period; weekly, 24 hours' rest in a seven-day period or 48 hours' rest in a 14-day period. Any hours-of-work restrictions are still subject to emergency provision, but that type of flexibility within the statute has always been there.

We also have overtime averaging, which I mentioned to you earlier. Overtime averaging is currently allowed for up to four weeks, but it requires a permit from the ministry. The new changes would simply be a procedural step in the ministry involvement in this type of situation. It involves their not having to issue these permits and approvals. It's an arrangement that is dealt with directly between the employer and the employee and not with the Ministry of Labour in-between.

Overtime would continue to be payable at time and a half of regular wages after 44 hours in a week. But overtime hours could be averaged over four weeks with the written agreement of the employee without ministry approval. So basically it's a procedural step that has been eliminated and allows flexibility in the employment relationship.

I'm very pleased to have spoken on this piece of legislation, and I give the rest of my time to the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I appreciate the member's sharing his time with me. We have a meeting to get to, and I just got a note about that meeting. If those folks are watching me on TV, I'll be about 20 minutes before I can get to that meeting.

I want to compliment the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford for his speech. He has always taken a keen interest, with his background as a labour lawyer, in issues that effect changes to the labour laws in Ontario. When I was a parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour in our previous mandate, he was always someone we consulted widely with and someone who had a working involvement with labour legislation in Ontario for many years. So it's always much appreciated to hear from that member.

The member talked about some of the other issues that are in this bill that have received short shrift or little attention in the media and during some of the public debate on this issue.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): What public debate?

Mr Maves: The member opposite asks, "What public debate?" It's a good topic for him to bring up. I remember, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour in the previous mandate, prior to 1999, at that point in time the Ministry of Labour was working on Employment Standards Act reform. There were papers that went out then. There was quite a bit of consultation done back then on Employment Standards Act reform, so the member opposite realizes there's quite a bit of discussion, quite a bit of work that has been done in this area of Employment Standards Act reform.

The question is, why did we need to have employment standards reform? The answer is that the Employment Standards Act that exists is a very old act, well over 30 years old, and it has never really had substantial reform. When I last spoke on this bill I talked about the changing nature of the workplace; for instance, the increase in the number of businesses that are run out of the home and the increasing number of people who do contract work out of

their homes. So the point is that the changing nature of the workplace screamed for—I remember last time when we talked about this bill my pager went off in the middle of the session. It was an interesting interruption in the proceedings because it highlighted the fact that even the technology we have today, compared to what was available in 1968, and therefore the types of work that were done in 1968, has changed so much. That pager going off showed the changing nature of the work, with all of the mechanical equipment, the computer equipment, the technology that has developed. All of this screamed out for changes to the Employment Standards Act.

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So we did a lot of work back between 1995 and 1999 on reforming the employment standards in general. Even prior to our coming in, I believe the NDP, through its Ministry of Labour, was looking at reforming employment standards. This minister has put out a white paper to discuss reform of employment standards. We've had many hours of debate in this House on these reforms specifically. The minister, as he has said, has been in several cities and spoken to over 700 people about this bill; I believe it was in the Sarnia-Lambton area. So there has been quite a bit of consultation and discussion about these particular changes to the employment standards.

Not only that, but members opposite today did a bit of a show about closure motions of this government and they talked about the concern that there was a lack of debate on government bills in this session, in 1999, in this mandate, and the mandate from 1995-99. In actual fact, when one goes back and looks, they'll find out that actually this government of Ontario, between 1995 and 1999, had more hours of legislative debate on its bills than any in the history of the province of Ontario. For that matter, we had more hours of debate than any government in the history of Canada in that four-year period. Not only that, but we also had more hours of public committee work on bills between 1995 and 1999 than any government in the history of Ontario, than any government in the history of Canada. Those are just hard and fast facts. Anyone can look those up and see the number of public hearings the government had and the amount of debate in the Legislature that the government has had on its bills over time. Those are a matter of record.

The members opposite will always have a hue and cry about debate time and committee time and so on and so forth on just about every bill. That was the case between 1995 and 1999. It is still the case today. Quite frankly, with closure motions on a lot of bills, I know that previously, to 1990, there was quite a bit of work done between the House leaders and all three parties. They would sit down and get to compromises on bills and the amount of time that was suitable for debate of bills. Up until 1990 closure motions were used extremely rarely because there was that good relationship on all sides of the House, between House leaders, to negotiate and talk about time for debate of bills in the House, and closure motions were rarely used.

In the 1990-95 government of the NDP, closure motions started to get more use because there was a breakdown in several instances of that type of co-operation between the House leaders. So the NDP government started to invoke closure motions more often on debates on bills because it deemed that those bills were important to it as the government of the day, to get those bills passed.

Interjections.

Mr Maves: The members opposite will heckle and talk about the reading of the rivers and lakes, and we all know about that. That exactly speaks to the point, actually. The NDP quite often, or the Liberals, will come up with a variety of ways to try to stall debate and stall bills from going through because they disagree with them.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): It was Harris who read the rivers and lakes. Don't you remember, Bart?

Mr Maves: The rivers and lakes bill that the member is shouting about across the aisle was indeed from the current Premier many years ago. That was probably an occasion when the NDP indeed invoked closure, but it speaks to the point that that cycle broke down between the three parties. That's when the NDP started quite often to invoke closure.

Now, in 1995-99, we've found that that continued process of co-operation among the parties and agreement on the timely passage of bills through the Legislature, there just wasn't that co-operation there. So, like the NDP invoking closure on many of their bills, we felt that a lot of the bills we were introducing between 1995 and 1999 were similarly important to us, and we followed their practice of invoking closure. Unfortunately, that multiparty co-operation that used to be there is still not there and quite often closure is indeed invoked. That is because the business of the government of the day has to proceed, and if we didn't invoke closure, we wouldn't get those bills through.

Members opposite, as I said, from 1995 to 1999, despite the amount of hours of debate we had in the Legislature, despite the many hours of public hearings that we had—setting records in both instances—screamed and hue-and-cried then that there wasn't enough consultation, and they continue to do that on most government bills of the day.

I know that when the members opposite rise to speak they will indeed bring that up tonight, and that's fine, but I wanted to make that explanation so the folks at home who may listening can understand some of the dynamics of the Legislature, some of the history the Legislature has gone through, and some of the reasons behind closure motions that get brought in by the government.

Before I was interrupted and took the other route in my discussion for the benefit of the two members from Hamilton, I was talking about some of the other things that are in this Employment Standards Act that are passed over quite often. Many of these provisions I would say are carried over from the Employment Standards Act. A

lot of them of course have been reworded in an attempt to make the act more readable. Anyone who reads a lot of the acts in the Legislature of Ontario, whether it be in this sector or any other sector, will say they are unreadable and not understandable by the average person. A lot of changes that are being made to the Employment Standards Act are simply rewording of provisions so that they can indeed be read and understood by more folks more easily.

There are more requirements in this legislation to have employers post materials to make sure that folks in the workplace understand their rights and responsibilities.

It's my understanding that quite a few workplaces today already pay by direct deposit, but there is a piece in this legislation that actually allows that. I remember that at one point in time there were some laws on the books which the Red Tape Commission found that in effect made it illegal to be using fax machines in Ontario. That was obviously a practice that was occurring all over the province on a daily basis and that had to be revoked. So here is a piece of this legislation that now allows the payment of wages by direct deposit, which is obviously something that has been happening in our society.

The parental leave provisions in this bill are extremely important, given the federal changes to maternity leave provisions for unemployment insurance. We needed to make changes in our employment standards in order to make Ontario's system dovetail with the changes that are being made at the federal level, and those are in here. For instance, for parents whose child was born or came into their care after December 31, 2000, job-protected parental leave will be increased upon the passage of this bill to 35 weeks for women who also take pregnancy leave and 37 weeks for all other new parents. As I said, this is vitally important so that we might dovetail with the federal changes to the employment insurance benefits. It's something that quite frankly all members of the Legislature received quite a bit of contact about over the past several months. It's something that we've all been pushed for, and that change indeed is in this bill.

Family crisis leave is something we actually campaigned on in the 1999 election. This is emergency leave that would provide for up to 10 unpaid days a year of job-protected leave for recognized family and medical reasons for employees in workplaces with 50 or more employees. That's also important. Everyone knows that you can get into a situation like a death in the family or a serious illness of a child. A lot of employers right now are cognizant of the need for that parent to be at home and there isn't a problem. Unfortunately, there are some cases when it is a problem, and we hope this section of this bill will allow people to spend some time at home in situations of emergency family crisis.

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A lot has been said about the averaging of work hours in this legislation, where an employee can choose, if he wants, to have a flexible workweek and work more hours. In a four-week period he can work more hours in the earlier weeks so that at the end of the four-week

period he might take a week off. Right now that employer, with the lack of ability to average overtime hours, wouldn't want to engage in that type of scheduling even if an employee requested it and it was beneficial to the employee for whatever reason that employee would have. That now, as the member from Barrie has already spoken about, is made possible by this legislation. The member from Barrie also talked about the fact that if we're going to do that, we need to make sure the anti-reprisal provisions within the act are stronger, and indeed they are.

I might say that a lot of these activities that we've spoken about, that the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has spoken about, already occur in the province of Ontario. There's a permit system that was in use when the Liberals were in office, when the New Democrats were in office. Thousands and thousands of permits were applied for for flexible work arrangements in the past, and those have been granted as a matter of course by the Ministry of Labour. There were some anti-reprisal provisions governing that permit system, and we've actually toughened that anti-reprisal and enforcement system.

Currently, employers must seek permits or approvals from the ministry for many variations from the standards, including excess daily hours, excess weekly hours, averaging weekly hours and overtime, splitting meal breaks, alternate arrangements for scheduling, and paying vacation. As I said, that's a practice that has been ongoing in the province for many years under many different governments. The proposed new act largely eliminates that rubber-stamp process at the Ministry of Labour and their involvement in issuing permits.

In order to balance this, as I said, we saw the need for improved anti-reprisal provisions. Currently, employment standards officers can only reinstate and compensate employees in very limited circumstances, and in all other situations reinstatement or compensation can only occur following a prosecution. The proposal in this act would broaden an employment standards officer's authority to reinstate or compensate employees, thereby avoiding lengthy and costly prosecution through the courts. So we're going to enhance the employment standards officers' ability to do their job; we're going to make it tougher on any bad employers out there who contravene the act, whatever section they contravene. Where the employment standards officers can be involved, we are indeed expanding their ability to do so.

Currently, ESOs can only issue orders to pay for monetary violations. They have no authority to order employees to comply with the act or to address non-monetary violations. The only remedy in these instances is a prosecution in a provincial court, which is expensive, and the outcomes are uncertain for everyone involved. As I said earlier, this proposal broadens the authority to order compliance with all provisions of the act.

Also, as the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford spoke about earlier, the ESA currently provides for a maximum fine of \$50,000 and six months in jail. That's on corporations. The proposed new Employment Standards Act would include escalating maximum fines:

\$100,000 for a first offence, \$250,000 for a second, and a maximum of \$500,000 for a third offence. So it substantially stiffens the penalties for those employers who contravene the Employment Standards Act. Similarly, the maximum jail term also increases, from six months to a year.

The current maximum fine for an individual contravening the act remains at \$50,000 a year. But it's a stiff penalty for any employer who contravenes the act. For instance, in the overtime provisions that we've talked about and the flexible working hours that we've talked about earlier, that you've heard much about in the media—and the minister has been absolutely adamant about this, that in many cases it has to be employee initiated; in other cases, of course, the employee and the employer, there has to be consent before the work arrangement is allowed. In any case where the employer is acting in an untoward manner toward the employee in order to get that consent, that is in effect an area where the employment standards officer can come in and make a decision on that contravention of the act.

The penalties for contravening the act, as I said, are dramatic. Quite frankly, employment standards officers in the past have not done a very good job of really making sure that the Employment Standards Act is not contravened. They've had their hands tied a little bit by the act itself. So we're untying their hands, we're giving them more authority and we believe that they'll use it, and any bad employer who believes he's going to contravene the act had better think twice about it.

Thank you very much, Speaker. It has been a pleasure to join the debate.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I'm happy to share my time with the member for Hamilton East. Just on that note, in speaking to this bill, the Employment Standards Act, on the heels of a government member who wants to speak about this act, he just finished talking about all of the fines that they've added and the increased fine levels that they afforded to us and to employees now across Ontario for employers who contravene the act.

It would really be helpful to have inspectors in the workplace in order to lay a charge to effect the fine. So what good is having all of these great, big, powerful fines when the employers contravene the act if we don't have any inspectors to go in search of them? When you call the 1-800—probably soon to be 1-900, so you'll likely have to pay for that call as well—you never get a real voice. Is that not the case?

We see tonight a number of people here in the House who are truly interested in the changes being made to the employment floor across Ontario, and they're interested because we're near Christmastime and a lot of people are shopping. They're down at Devonshire Mall; it's probably open till midnight tonight. Do any of them realize that the member for Windsor West is in the House speaking about something that is likely going to affect many, many people in the riding of Windsor West? Maybe not. But when the bill is passed and it comes hitting home, they're going to call my office in Windsor. They're going

to call my office and they're going to say, "I don't know what to do. They've extended my workweek. I didn't know they could do this." Do you know that in employers' places now in my riding, places that don't have union representation, these individuals often don't know whether they're going to have a job in three months? These are the individuals who don't realize that they can stand up and say, "This is the act and these are my rights," and even if they knew they could stand up and say that, they don't, because when the wish list of the boss comes out saying, "Which of these individuals am I going to call back for the next three months?" they're not calling back these individuals who are giving them such a hard time about following the rules.

That's how it happens in lots of places; not all places. But I can tell you what the job of the labour minister is in the province of Ontario. It's supposed to protect the people who don't have protection. That's the job of the government. Let me tell you what this labour minister is doing. He is not protecting those individuals in my riding who don't have the support or the benefit of being unionized with a signed contract where individuals go to bat for them at the negotiating table to lay the terms of work for the next three years. Those individuals should be able to look to their government and say, "That's the labour minister. He's going to make sure they do right by me."

Do you know what this minister did? He introduced the Employment Standards Act instead. Do you know who bent his ear for this bill, so he claims? The chamber of commerce. You know, I went back home last weekend and ran into lots of people from the chamber of commerce. Do you know how many times they mentioned to me the Employment Standards Act? A big zero. Not one said to me, "Way to go, Mike Harris government. Thanks for doing this for me." Not one.

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But do you know what people did talk about on all the talk shows all the way down the 401 through Cambridge, through Waterloo, through London? Every time I flip the dial as I head back home, they're talking about an extended 60-hour workweek. Not one caller said that was a good idea. When the CBC here in Toronto had a morning show they polled all parts of society to talk about the 60-hour workweek. Not one called in and said that was a good idea.

Where does this Minister of Labour think he's coming from to introduce such a bill? Then see how galling it is for Conservative members to stand in the House, as this one from Niagara just did, and talk about the parental leave benefit in here. Wait a minute. What about the working women who aren't going to find daycare to benefit from these longer work hours that are now going to be prescribed by the act? What happened to those working women who need the benefit of your being so helpful to them as parents? What about the real-life examples of what happens when you can't take a vacation a week at a time because of what has been prescribed by this bill? What about that notion that you should be

able to have some amount of time off, whether it's for family or whatever you choose to do? Now, because of the bill, actually written into law, the employer doesn't need to give that to you.

Again, I say to the individuals who have the benefit of being represented by a union, to have very good individuals who negotiate the contract of working conditions in the workforce, that's great. But it's quite interesting that many of our labour leaders have come forward over this bill to say that this is wrong, that there are individuals out there who don't have that representation.

I urge the government members to listen to the individuals I'm talking about. Many of these people are women. I would submit the lion's share are women. Many are immigrants. Many have not had the benefit of education. Many are the last ones who are going to call a 1-800 number and say, "Minister of Labour, we have a contravention of the act up on the plant floor." They're just not going to do it.

I say to the minister again, that's your job. Your job is to protect the people who don't have the protection. This bill doesn't do that. It is about fairness. The government is supposed to be about fairness. Regardless of what your political stripe is, you're supposed to make things fair for people in Ontario. This bill doesn't make things fair. We had to sit and listen to the galling member from Niagara talk about process and how much hearing time in the history of this—you just make up any facts you want and no one will challenge you. You know what? I challenge the member for Niagara Falls. I challenge him on all of those—

The Speaker: Order. Would the member come to order for a quick minute. I'm afraid you can't use language where you say people make things up. I would appreciate it if she would withdraw that.

Mrs Pupatello: I withdraw. The vivid imagination of the member for Niagara Falls to talk about what they've done, history in the making in terms of—

The Speaker: Order. Just before we begin, I know we have some people who have come a long way and we appreciate the fact that you're all here. We did want to open things up to allow people to come here. But I think you know the rules. We're not allowed to clap. I say this in all seriousness. If it does happen, unfortunately we'll have to clear the gallery, and I do not want to do that. I know it's also difficult not to sometimes laugh and yell out. As Speaker, there are many times that I want to do that, and I'm not allowed to do that. So I'd appreciate the co-operation of all the people in the gallery. Sorry for the interruption. I'm getting to it quickly. Sorry to the member for Windsor West.

Mrs Pupatello: Thank you. I appreciate the fact that if it weren't so serious, this would be funny, that everything I'm saying would be funny, because sometimes you just can't believe what the government has the gall to do. To stand in the House tonight and talk about process. Do you know that the last time I spoke to this bill was second reading, and do you know what happened between second and third reading on this bill? Nothing. Not a

public hearing. No consultation. Don't stand in the House now and tell me what you've done on this bill. You didn't have public hearings on these labour bills. If you had toured the province, if you had gone across Ontario and asked people what they knew about this proposal, they'd have told you you were crazy. There's not an employer that called my office and said, "A 60-hour workweek, that's what I've been looking for." Not a one.

Do you know, in this day and age, the staff shortages around? You cannot go a Tim Hortons without seeing a great, big, fat sign that says "Help wanted." You can't go to most service-oriented businesses that don't have a big sign that says, "We need help. We need you to come and work here." When those kinds of working conditions exist, it is up to the employer to pay more, to offer better benefits in order to keep employees. That is the playing field we currently have in the province. That's why—this is just speculation—there are so many young men now working at Tim Hortons who have a little more trouble folding up sandwiches because they're not used to this kind of work. But the truth is that in this day and age it's up to the employer to set the tone a little higher to keep good people working for them because we have a shortage in some areas. But this is hardly the time that you need to go to employers and say, "Here, we're going to give you gifts for Christmas," like Santa Claus Stockwell offering the bill before Christmas.

It really would be nice to see that we offer things that are fair, that the government does what's fair, and you know what's fair? What's fair is the individual who lives in my riding who doesn't have union representation who needs to know she doesn't have to call a 1-800 number because there's been a contravention of the act, who doesn't have to feel the intimidation of how she needs to behave on the work floor so she can be assured that at the end of that three months she's going to get called to come back to work because she knows what the rules of the game are in her place. You know what? This minister and this government have done absolutely nothing to give her protection. That's the job of the government and the job has been failed miserably.

Mr Agostino: I'm certainly pleased to join this debate tonight, following the comments made by my colleague from Windsor.

Before we get into the details of the bill, I think what's important to put into perspective is how significant these pieces of legislation are. We're debating a bill tonight, and for the people who are watching, let's understand this is third reading debate and this government has allowed a total of two hours for all of the third reading debate on this piece of legislation. That works out to about 40 minutes per caucus.

What is really difficult is not only what's in this bill, but that at 8:45 tonight we get two more hours to debate another significant piece of legislation with regard to the Labour Relations Act that has great impact on working people in this province. That gives us two more hours. So on a total of four hours' debate tonight, this government is going to pass two significant pieces of legislation that

impact on millions of Ontario workers, without one moment, one second, one hour, one day of public hearings—not one second of public hearings.

I want to read something: “For a government that promised to be open, this closure action is the height of arrogance, the height of exactly everything you campaigned against and you said you were for.” Do you know who said that? Mike Harris in 1993. Mike Harris was a great democrat at that time. Mike Harris believed in democracy at that time.

This bill had closure again, and closure means that this government decides after two or three hours’ debate, “That it. We’re not debating any more. We’re moving on to the next bill.” The bill we’re going to debate at 8:45 had a closure.

Let me just remind the House of what the statistics are in regard to this government’s record of closure, which is undemocratic, which is cutting off debate, which is not allowing public input, which has not allowed this Legislature to debate this. Frank Miller and Bill Davis, in all the years they were in power in this province, which was a long time, cut off debate in the Legislature three times. David Peterson in five years cut off debate four times. Under Bob Rae it was 21 times. Does anyone really believe how many times this government has done this? In five years, the great democrat Mike Harris has cut off debate 64 times. That is more than double the last 25 years of combined governments in Ontario. Mike Harris in five years has doubled what 25 years of previous governments did not do when it came to cutting off debate in this Legislature. It is so undemocratic. It is so typical of a bully government that has bullied people from day one: has bullied teachers, has bullied students and now is bullying working people once again.

This bill tonight is just another indication of the arrogance of this government, the contempt they have for working people and a government whose agenda is only for big business and the companies that pay \$25,000 a table to attend their fundraisers. That’s what this bill is all about.

This bill here tonight, Bill 147: five million non-unionized Ontarians are affected by this legislation. Five million people are going to be affected by this legislation, and this government has the gall and the nerve to put it through the House without one minute of public consultation. Not one Ontarian has had a chance since this bill was introduced to come to us in a public hearing and tell us what they like or don’t like about this bill.

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Not only is the bill damaging, not only is the bill bad, but what is also disturbing is the undemocratic, bullying arrogance of this government to ram this through. When you look at the bill, it is not only an attack on working people; it’s an attack on working families in Ontario. Mike Harris likes to talk about children, he likes to talk about families; he’s the champion of kids: “If you don’t have a Christmas present, give me a call. I’ll get you a Christmas present”—the protector of kids in Ontario. This same government now says to working moms or

working dads or single moms or young people across Ontario, “You’re going to work 60 hours a week.” Most of the western world, most of the progressive world, has gone the other way. If you look at countries around the world: France, Italy, 35 hours; the Netherlands, 36 hours. Mike Harris goes to 60 hours. The last time we had a 60-hour workweek in this province was in 1944. Instead of moving the clock forward, Mike Harris moves us back 60 years in Ontario.

But hang on. He tells you there’s a balance here, that you have an option, that you can say no, because there’s a balance of power. The working person, the single mom working in a coffee shop or the young student working in a restaurant has a balance of power with the owner. “You can say no. Just refuse. There’s no problem.” This government believes that if you should refuse, you won’t be threatened, you won’t be harassed, you won’t be fired or demoted. “Of course not, because there’s a right to refuse here.” That is such hogwash. That is such garbage. There’s no right to refuse here. The reality is that if you refuse, life is going to be made miserable for you. Mike Harris’s inspectors are not going to come in there and crack down. They haven’t hired new inspectors. There’s nobody who will answer the 1-800 call.

The reality is that this is going to force people to work 60 hours a week without any repercussion, without any opportunity to say no, without any choice. Then they cover it under what’s called “flexibility.” They say you can choose the hours you want to work. As we know, we have a daycare system here that I’m sure is open at 11 o’clock at night. “You can choose your hours. Somebody will look after your kids.” That’s such hogwash. It is such garbage to suggest that this is somehow in the interests of working people and working families across Ontario.

Not only do they give you 60 hours, then they force you to work for less overtime. Under current legislation, if you work over 44 hours in this province you get overtime. What does Mike Harris do with his piece of legislation here? He says you can average it out over four weeks, again, to give you that flexibility, that balance that you need. You just average it out. Well, look what happens. One scenario: you work 60 hours week one, 55 hours week two, 25 hours week three and 35 hours week four. That averages out to just a little less than 44 hours a week, by coincidence. That means the week you worked 60 hours you do not get one cent of overtime; the week you worked 55 hours you don’t get one cent of overtime. So when you average it out over the four weeks, what it means is that you’ve been shafted out of 25 hours of overtime that you would have had under current legislation. How is that fair? How does that help people? How does the government in their heart of hearts look at themselves in the mirror and justify thinking that a young person, a single mom working for \$7 or \$6.85 an hour in a coffee shop, should be ripped off for 25 hours of overtime a month? How do you do that in good conscience?

But this government is going to do it. After tonight, this is law. This is the law of the province of Ontario

after tonight. Legalized stealing and ripping off of overtime of working people and working families in Ontario is going to be the law under Mike Harris as of tonight.

Then it gets better. They talk about vacations. They want flexibility in vacations, of course. In time off under current legislation you have to have 24 hours over a seven-day period. But what they're saying is, "We can average that out. We can be flexible." They'll give you 48 hours over 14 days. That sounds reasonable, seven and seven, but what is unreasonable is the fact that you can now be forced to work 12 consecutive days without a day off under this piece of legislation, where here under the current rules you have to have a day off in seven.

Vacation time: now you can be dictated to as to what type of blocks you take your vacations in. So if you work at Frank's Hotdog Shop and Thursday is the slowest day of the week, Frank can say, "You know what, I'm going to give you every Thursday off as your vacation day." So your five or seven or 10 days of vacation get spread out over 10 weeks, a day at a time. How does that enhance family life, how does that enhance people's time with their kids, with their families, with their partners, with their parents? It doesn't. This is the type of regressive, southern, American, Republican legislation that is in front of us tonight.

I think Ontarians are going to be shocked once they see what has happened here. Ontarians are going to be shocked to believe that we are probably one of the few jurisdictions left anywhere in the world—Russia is moving back from a 60-hour workweek—that is going to mandate a 60-hour workweek in legislation, Ontario, the industrial heartland of the country, one of the leading economies in North America, one of the leading economies in the world. We're now moving to a 60-hour workweek, and this government does it all under the disguise of fairness and balance and helping people.

We talk about fatigue in the workplace. This will lead to more injuries, to more accidents. When people are forced to work longer hours, they're going to be less sharp, they're going to be more tired, they're more likely to make mistakes, they're more likely to get injured on the job, they're more likely to get in a car accident going home from work. They're more likely to add stress to the family because they're so tired at the end of the day or at the end of the week, being forced to work all these hours. Detrimental impact on families and kids and parents and moms and dads across Ontario, that's what this bill is all about.

Then they take great pride in talking about maternity leave. First of all, we could take that section out of this bill today and every member of this House would approve that piece of legislation in a second. They were dragged, kicking and screaming, into it. That was the opposition. We asked questions; the NDP put a bill in the House. The federal government passed the legislation. It wasn't a priority for Mike Harris when he talked about the maternity leave to match the federal legislation. They were forced into it. Now they trumpet it as this great achievement to help families.

So in the same bill that has a piece of legislation that talks about how it's helping families through extended maternity leave to match the federal legislation, they also have an unprecedented attack on families and kids and working people and working families across Ontario.

When we look at who this legislation impacts, we certainly know it's not going to be the Bay Street friends of Mike Harris. The corporate bosses are not impacted by this, of course not. Many of the individuals who are fortunate enough, in this province, to be protected by unions they're going to attack in the next bill. In this bill, they're spared to some degree. The next bill attacks those folks. But in this bill it is the most vulnerable workers in the province of Ontario, often new immigrants, often young people, often single moms, often people who are forced into difficult situations, who are forced to take minimum-wage jobs in a province where the minimum wage has not been increased in six or seven years. These are the folks who are going to be impacted most by this.

I don't know how this government can sit there in conscience and say, "This is fair, this is right, this is good, this is going to help." It does nothing at all. You can't pretend for a second there's a balance here. Who are we kidding? Who are we kidding to believe you can refuse any of these provisions and get away with it? It is unthinkable, it is unreasonable and it is unfair.

You've got to wonder, who is asking for this? Certainly we don't know, because we've had no public hearings, who has come forward. But somehow I don't think the single mom working at Tim Hortons was knocking on Mike Harris's door and saying, "Premier, please, give me a 60-hour workweek. I'm not working long enough," or, "Premier, please, limit my overtime. I want to work 60 hours without overtime." I'm sure there's a lineup at the Premier's door of working people who wanted these changes. I'm sure that's what's driving and motivating this government. It is not the corporations or their Bay Street friends, of course not; it's working people. They want the opportunity to have vacation one day at a time, of course, over a 10-week period. Of course they want to be screwed out of 25 hours of overtime in a month, because they make way too much money. When you make \$6.85 an hour or seven bucks in 15 hours, my God, you're probably living high off the hog, according to this government's standards. We know that, because look at what they've done to welfare recipients. They have to beat them up. Welfare recipients were doing far too well. Can you imagine, in Ontario today, a single person on welfare, how dare they complain about the fact that they get \$520 a month? Of course, as we know, Mike Harris thinks they're spending all that money on booze and drugs, so now we're going to test them all.

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This is a government that has made a history and a career out of attacking working people, out of attacking the poor. In this province, you get punished by Mike Harris for being poor. There's a correlation here between what this bill does and what the welfare legislation in Ontario has done. There's no question there's a pattern here.

They don't go after their corporate friends. Inasmuch as I respect the Ontario Medical Association, every time they negotiate the OMA wrestles the government to the ceiling. But certainly the working poor don't get that type of access to this government. Single moms, new immigrants, who work for minimum age, who work under difficult circumstances in our version of sweat shops in this province, don't have that type of access or protection. What they get from this government, instead of a hand up, is the back of the hand to the side of the head. This legislation does that.

What they're doing is not only wrong, it is immoral, it is unethical. A government, it doesn't matter what political stripe, has a responsibility to protect the most vulnerable citizens in our society, to help people who can't help themselves, to help people by giving them a hand up.

If you look at what they have done to labour since they've come to power, any time a labour leader dares speak out on behalf of his or her members—remember, these are democratically elected individuals who are there to represent the men and women who work under that local—when they dare criticize, they're the union bosses, the evil, special-interest union bosses.

When Bay Street calls, that's OK. They're not evil, they're not special interest. When they buy their \$25,000 table at the fundraiser, that's OK. That's looking after the interests of Ontarians. But if labour leaders speak, they're those evil, demonized union bosses, and any of us who speak out in favour of working men and women are in the pockets of union bosses. That's the Harris philosophy; that's the agenda that drives this government.

I think people across this province tonight have to understand what we're dealing with here, why this is unproductive, why this is dangerous and why this is damaging for Ontarians. I urge people across this province to really pay attention in the months to come as to what is going to happen with this piece of legislation. Let's see how many times people are going to be able to refuse work and get away with it, to refuse the 60-hour work-week and get away with it. What they've now declared is open season on the working poor in this province. What this government has said is, "Now you're the target. Now we allow the bosses, the employers, to openly, with government sanction, go after you."

I ask Ontarians who are listening tonight, are you going to trust Mike Harris and Chris Stockwell to protect you when you've been harassed in the workplace, based on that track record? Do you believe that when you pick up the phone and call the ministry that Mike Harris and Chris Stockwell—and let's understand one thing: we know where this is coming from. The minister is simply the mouthpiece for the Premier on this. He gets his marching orders, they wind him up so he walks out of there, they leave enough batteries in there to get him going for an hour, he comes out here, does what he's told and goes back and gets more marching orders from the Premier's office.

Let's understand this. This is coming from the Premier's office, this is coming from Mike Harris, this is

coming from the whiz kids in that office who don't have a clue what it's like to work for \$6, \$7 or \$8 an hour. Any of us who have been in those situations understand clearly the difficulty and the circumstances that we're in when we're doing that kind of work.

The sad part is that most of the people who are involved in the drafting of this legislation and putting this together don't have a damn clue what it's like to try to get by on \$6.85 an hour or try to raise a family on \$7 or \$8 an hour. Instead of helping, what we see here tonight—I'm going to wrap up so that there are a few minutes left for one of my colleagues the next time around—is an unprecedented attack on working people and working families. This is wrong. It's undemocratic. It is disgraceful. It is an attack that was unnecessary and is one that's mean-spirited and nasty. It is one that Ontarians are going to come to realize soon enough, and the real agenda of this government once again is going to be exposed for what it is: a Republican, right-wing government that caters to their business friends at the expense of working men and women in this province.

This legislation that we're going to pass tomorrow at 1:45, which this government is going to ram through with their majority, is going to impact and hurt five million Ontarians. It is wrong and it is a disgrace. This government should be ashamed of themselves. I don't know how they can sleep at night, knowing they're supporting legislation that five million vulnerable people in this province are going to be hurt by, people who are going to work more hours for less money, with less safety, less protection, less dignity, less time with their families. That's what this is all about. It's an unnecessarily nasty attack, a disgraceful attack. This government should be ashamed of themselves and embarrassed at what they're ramming through the House tonight.

Mr Christopherson: Let me begin my remarks by, first of all, pointing out and thanking all those Ontarians who took the time out today—I know people watching at home can't see this, but the entire public galleries, both sides, are filled. For some time now, this government has liked to say when they bring in their legislation at lightning speed that the lack of people in the galleries indicated that people didn't really care. We explained to them that what it has to do with is the fact that you're moving things so fast and with so little opportunity for debate that people don't even know what's going on and suddenly it's law, and that had a lot to do with it.

We made a concerted effort this time to make sure people knew what you were trying to do, particularly to the most vulnerable in our society, and there you go, the galleries are full. It's six days before Christmas; it's 8 o'clock at night. Please don't applaud—you'll get thrown out—but I want to thank you, thank you, thank you, for being here because your statement in being here says more than I could do, or any of us here with four or five hours' debate. Thank you so much for being here. Thank you, Gary Malkowski.

We need to understand that this is not just a few amendments. This is not just one or two little things that

came across the floor and suddenly the opposition decided to make a mountain out of a molehill. The reality is that this bill in front of us, Bill 147, replaces five existing pieces of legislation. This is an Employment Standards Act that is brand new from its first page to its last page: 88 pages, to be exact, of a bill that affects millions and millions of Ontarians, and here we are this evening, a few days shy of Christmas, about to see this bill rammed through this Legislature without one minute of public hearings—disgraceful, unbelievable, undemocratic to say the least.

Let me just say one thing. I've said this before, but I do want to say it this evening to get it on the record again. The government has said that if we believed in the parental leave clauses in here, the extension of the job protection that allows Ontario workers, mostly women, to access the EI funds, we would approve this bill. If we cared about those issues, we would allow this bill to go through. Let me say here again, not just as the labour critic but as the NDP House leader, I commit on behalf of the NDP that if that's what you care about and it has to be in place by January 1, 2001, we've got a private member's bill in the name of Shelley Martel, the member from Nickel Belt, that gives effect to exactly what you want to do here. I see the government whip in his place. You say the word right here and we'll make that law tonight, unanimously, and then we can go about the democratic business of analyzing exactly what you're doing here.

The government whip does not move from his place, so obviously that is a ruse that no one is going to buy into.

2000

"Ontario's Tory government should abandon its ongoing bid to rush into law far-reaching changes to the Employment Standards Act.

"These changes, which could become law as early as this week, could negatively impact on the working conditions of every employee in Ontario, particularly the most vulnerable.

"Equally worrisome, the amendments, which have already passed second reading in the Legislature, have not been the subject of broad, public consultation or committee hearings at Queen's Park."

That was Sunday's editorial in the Toronto Sun. The Toronto Sun. Whoa. I could have made that speech. I don't quote the Toronto Sun very often in this place, for reasons that are obvious. I just about fell off my chair when I read these words, because they are so clear and they are from a group who acknowledge that, by and large, they like your agenda. They support it, and do so editorially all the time. I won't even get into the editorials they wrote when the NDP was in power. So it's very clear what their ideological bent is, but as we've been trying to tell you from the outset, this is not only—because it is that—a philosophical political debate. There is also an issue of fairness, of democracy, of giving people a chance to be heard. You can't say that they don't care. You can't throw that one at me any more.

There they are. They care. I guarantee you, if we ask them, to a person they want to have something to say about this bill, and there are a lot of other people.

If for no other reason than that you think your hand is so strong, that we've been misrepresenting what you've been saying about the 60-hour workweek, why wouldn't you want the chance to go into committee so you could beat us up politically? Why wouldn't you want to do that, so you could roll in your legal experts, your labour experts, your time management experts, whatever experts you've got out there? Bring them all in and let them show us how wrong we are. But that's not the case, and there's the reason. The fact that the Toronto Sun editorial felt it necessary to speak out using this language—their business is words—says loudly that this is not the tradition of Ontario. This is not the democracy that we know. I'll tell you something else: it's unacceptable. This is not your personal fiefdom. Ontario, whether you like it or not, still belongs to the people of Ontario, and they're not about to relinquish it to you or anybody else.

Eighty-eight pages. The government talked about consultation. The member from Niagara Falls talked about Bill 49. I'll tell you about Bill 49 really quickly. Bill 49 was supposed to be a minor housekeeping bill that had very minor changes, just a few number updates, a little bit of language change. By the way, it was done when all the labour leaders were out on the west coast at a CLC convention. That thing hit the floor here and you could see the mushroom cloud over Queen's Park, because it was an attack on the Employment Standards Act. Yes, we went out in public consultations on that one for four weeks, and you got ripped big time. We changed what you were planning to do. The changes that you made hurt people, but they hurt people less because we got a say.

Let me tell you, most of what's here in this new law wasn't in Bill 49. You like to say it was, but if we got to committee, I'd like you to start pointing out to me where the similarities are, because everything you said you were going to do in 49, save and except a couple of big things that aren't in here, you did already.

I'll tell you what did happen. You want to know the process that was followed here? The government issued a white paper over the summer, held some ministerial hearings, consultations, but not legislative hearings. What's the difference? In the kind of meetings that the minister brags about—you know, he's a clever fellow. He knew the moment was going to come in this place when he was going to have to defend not having public hearings, and he assumed, in my opinion, that as long as he could point to all these communities and cities that he went into, that constitutes public hearings, and he could make that argument.

Well, he does make that argument, but I don't think he makes it successfully, because I attended one of those meetings in Ottawa to present the position of the NDP caucus. The meeting is run by the minister, and that's fine. I'm not saying he doesn't have the right to hold meetings and run them any way he wants, but he ran the meeting. It was his old job as Speaker and his new job as

minister all rushed into one and he was the grand emperor of the room. His staff made all the arrangements, his staff provided the supports necessary to make those discussions go on, and he decided when they'd begin and when they would end, which is his right.

That is a whole different world, let me tell you, than rolling into a legislative committee where opposition members have rights, where the Chair of the meeting is not playing a partisan role, where we have a chance to bring in our experts, where we can cross-examine each other's experts, where we can let ordinary people who represent the families that are negatively affected by this bill come in and have their say. That's public hearings, not what the minister did.

And not just that. He changed some things from what was in the paper, and the paper was written in prose. It was written as a discussion paper. That's a lot different than legal format. Anybody here or who's watching who has had anything to do with contracts or negotiations will know that one word can make a huge difference in what happens in a piece of legislation.

Those are all the things that are supposed to happen at committee. Didn't happen. Five bills gone, 88 pages of a new law that affects millions of people, and no public hearings.

I want to point out, for the benefit of those who remember, that back in October 1995, we had Bill 7 in this place, and I suspect there are a lot of people who remember Bill 7. Bill 7 was very similar. People thought it was just an amendment to the Ontario Labour Relations Act, mainly that it was following up on the government's mandate to eliminate what I think was one of the best pieces of legislation the NDP passed as a government, and that was when we used our majority to outlaw scabs. That was a good thing to do. It was the right thing to do. You brought in Bill 7 and told everybody, "We're just amending things, getting rid of that nasty old NDP"—

Hon Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With all due respect to the people in the gallery, there is no doubt that what is happening is that demonstrations are taking place. There may not be noise. The standing orders, I remind you, are very clear, Speaker, that there should be no demonstrations by people in the gallery. I would ask you to keep decorum in this place, as is required by the standing orders.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Thank you. We want to obviously welcome all our guests to the gallery and remind them that demonstrations of any kind are not permitted in the Legislature. But we welcome you to listen and to watch these proceedings.

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Mr Christopherson: For the benefit of those who are watching at home, what's happening is that people are doing this, which is another way of applauding; it's another method of applauding and communicating. Somebody from the government side, the chief government whip, is hanging this on a technicality, saying they shouldn't be doing any kind of demonstration, even though it's really not upsetting anyone at all. The fact is,

it seems that you don't want any kind of expression of anything about what this government is doing. Nonetheless, people at home, that's what's going on. It's just another form of intimidation that the government's trying to perpetrate on the people. They will decide for themselves at the end of the day.

I was saying that they proposed and put forward that Bill 7 was merely revoking our nasty little Bill 40. That's not what happened. It was a brand new Ontario Labour Relations Act, front to back, and it was rammed through without any public hearings. That means that by this time tomorrow, the two legislative pillars that hold up labour relations in the province of Ontario, by and large, will be brand new—totally, front to back—pieces of legislation, rammed through by a right-wing government, and in neither case was there one minute of public hearings. That's some democratic legacy for you to leave behind.

You introduced this bill on November 23. It's going to be law tomorrow. We got into committee. The government says, "We want to do committee." I remember the minister standing in his place the last time we debated this and talking about how much he was looking forward to the clause-by-clause analysis. I want to point out to people that we didn't know at the time, until we got to the committee room, or at least I didn't have them all in my hands, that 24 pages of amendments were presented at that committee hearing. One amendment wasn't the government's; it was ours, the NDP's, and I'll refer to that shortly.

The meeting started December 13 at 3:30. Under the time allocation motion, which is another way of shutting down debate, like the motion that is forcing this to be debated tonight and will ram it through tomorrow, we were allowed—it's important to understand that clause-by-clause analysis means just that: clause-by-clause analysis.

Like overtime pay, section 22(2): "Subject to the regulations, if the employee and the employer agree to do so, the employee's hours of work may be averaged over a period of not more than four weeks for the purpose of determining the employee's entitlement, if any, to overtime pay." In my opinion, there are circumstances where this creates legalized theft. You're going to steal overtime payments that workers are entitled to but will be coerced out of.

Under clause-by-clause, we should be taking every clause of this bill and analyzing it to determine whether it's a good clause. An 88-page bill; 24 pages of amendments. One amendment alone, amendment 6, runs seven pages, just the amendment. Do you know how much time we were given to do a clause-by-clause analysis of all the amendments and the entire bill? One hour divided three ways. That was the extent of democracy as it affects millions of people in Mike Harris's Ontario: shameful, disgusting, indefensible and certainly undemocratic. That's the context.

I want to say directly through you, Speaker, to the public who are here that if you weren't here tonight, right about now I would be heckled beyond belief—I see my

Liberal colleagues nodding their heads. The government would be saying, "They don't care, Dave. You're out of touch. You don't represent the people. Nobody agrees with you. Look around." Let me say to the government, you look around. You can hide in here, but I want to tell you, these people, times tens of thousands, are out there, and they don't accept your law, and they certainly don't accept your process.

Now, let's deal with a few details. First, I want to read just a little bit more because this is a wonderful editorial. I should get a clean copy of this and frame it. I'm reading from the editorial now.

"It's not that all the proposals are necessarily bad." Well, no editorial is perfect. "It's that the Tories have not shown how they plan to protect non-unionized workers (meaning the majority of workers in Ontario) from unscrupulous bosses."

You've been claiming all along that that was just my rhetoric; that I'm the NDP labour critic and that's what you would expect to hear from me. Maybe so. You sure didn't expect to hear it from them, and they're raising it. I want to delve into this a little bit, because there are two issues that this government uses to justify the language and the options they're putting in here—"options" as they call them—one is the permit system and the other one is that it's all voluntary.

First of all, on the permits: again, the government is good at pointing out where something is not working perfectly and then offering up a solution that will make it worse and saying they were the only ones who had the guts to do anything. That's the same with the permit system. The permit system is not perfect. Most labour leaders, and certainly myself, would be the first ones to tell you that, but the solution is not to throw the whole thing out; quite frankly, it's to put the issue in front of us in committee and say, "Let's bring in people and find out how we can streamline it without losing the benefit of the permit system."

There is one thing the permit system did do, and eliminating it I think is the reason the government went down this road: it gave the government a vested interest in what's going on in the workplace. Were a lot of them processed on a routine basis? Yes. But the government was still a party to the overtime that was being talked about. You had a role. We should have improved that role and built on it, not eliminated it, but I think that's why you've done it. You've taken the government out of as many workplaces as you can, by virtue of the process that's in here. In my opinion, that leaves it open for even greater abuse because those unscrupulous employers will know the government is not party to this process. They've got a free rein.

The other issue is "voluntary," and this is the one that makes most of us gag. We haven't seen labour legislation in the province of Ontario talk about 60 hours since the master and servant legislation of 1884 to 1944; 1884 to 1944, the Master and Servant Act was the last piece of legislation that talked about 60 hours in this province. I've got to tell you, I'm surprised you didn't name Bill

147 the Master and Servant Act, because that's the kind of world it creates.

We have the government saying, "You don't have to worry about working 60 hours a week. You don't have to worry about having your overtime averaged, because employees can just say no. There has to be an agreement between the employer and the employee." I'm not sure what kind of fantasyland this government thinks workplaces are, but let me tell you what the Supreme Court of Canada said about individuals and their power relationship to their employers. It's very brief, but I think it makes the point far better than I could.

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This is the Supreme Court of Canada in 1997, in a case called Wallace and United Grain Growers. "The contract of employment has many characteristics that set it apart from the ordinary commercial contract. Individual employees on the whole lack both the bargaining power and the information necessary to achieve more favourable contract provisions than those offered by the employer.... This power imbalance is not limited to the employment contract itself, but informs virtually all facets of the employment relationship."

Do you get it? The worker and the boss. The boss tells the worker what they're going to do. The worker does not tell the boss what they are going to do. OK?

Supreme Court of Canada, 1989, another example: Slight Communications v Davidson. "The relation between an employer and an isolated employee or worker is typically a relation between a bearer of power and one who is not a bearer of power." You have power; the people of Ontario, unfortunately, do not. Does that help?

They go on to say in the same judgment: "The main object"—and this is so crucial—"of labour law has always been, and we venture to say will always be, to be a countervailing force to counteract the inequality of bargaining power which is inherent and must be inherent in the employment relationship."

There's no democracy in the workplace. This Legislature is beginning to reflect that reality. But there is no democracy. When a supervisor, foreman, foreperson, boss—call them whatever you want—when they walk up and ask somebody, "Would you please work this overtime?" if the employee says no—let's take a regular workplace with a regular worker. The worker says, "No, I don't want to work overtime." Let's say the employer respects that and goes away. He comes back a week later and says, "I'd like you to work overtime." You say, "No. I coach my kid's hockey team, and I've got commitments to be there. I can't work the overtime." The odds are that this employee is not going to be employee of the month. It's also likely that employee is not going to get any promotions, training or the good shifts or the good jobs. That, I would say to the government, is the best-case scenario. That's one where a worker knows they have the right to say no, they exercise it and that worker, at the end of the day, still manages to hang on to a job.

But let me point out other scenarios, and previous speakers have talked about the fact that it is the most

vulnerable in our society, it is often new Canadians, it is often women, it is often people whose first language is not English, and there are unscrupulous employers. The bad-boss hotline that the OFL put out was burning up the lines with reports of bad bosses. In those situations, it will be very clear to the employee, to the worker involved: "Either you work overtime or you won't be working here; either you agree to the averaging of overtime or you won't be working here. Either you agree to have your vacation taken one day at a time or you won't be getting any vacation because you won't be working here."

If it were not so, do you think we'd see this? Do you think we'd see even the Toronto Sun come forward and say they're worried about the most vulnerable?

This bill is so damaging and your arguments are so stupid that it boggles the mind that you've been given the power to make this the law without anybody having a say. Who in their right mind is going to say to their boss, "Yes, over the next four weeks I want to work a little bit of overtime, but let's make sure we use that new law that guarantees I don't get paid overtime rates for it. What do you say we do that?" Are there circumstances where someone might want to enter into that kind of relationship where it's not detrimental to them? Possibly, but we're not in committee so we don't have time for those individuals to come in and for us to talk about how we might go about doing that without leaving millions, virtually millions, of people vulnerable.

Somebody's lunch: maybe this sounds small to some people, but when you're out there working every day, this is a big deal. The boss can now tell you that you don't take a half-hour lunch, you take two 15-minute breaks. Just like that, and nobody's got a say. You tell me how that's fair. You tell me that you're a party that cares, oh, so much about families. This is anti-family legislation. You're going to have people choosing between their job and their children. That's wrong. If anything, we should be going in the other direction.

The member from Niagara Falls talked earlier, and he let it slip. He's usually pretty careful. He made a mistake because he said that this law talks about people—he referred to the modernizing of the law reflecting new workplaces and the modernization, and he talked about contract workers. Nothing in here. If you cared about contract workers, you'd agree with the NDP and our proposal that we pro-rate benefits for part-time workers and contract workers. That's dealing with the modern-day reality of the workplace in a way that's family friendly, because you know what happens then? When you pro-rate benefits, you give workers and their families dental plans, insurance plans and extended medical plans.

We're in the biggest economic boom we've ever seen in North America and you've got nothing for working people in this bill except vulnerability, lost time with their families and lost wages they are otherwise entitled to. You have no right to call yourself a government that cares about families or family values. You don't know the first thing about it.

Do you know what else? This is the law that determines what the minimum wage is in Ontario. You've got \$4 billion in the budget we debated this afternoon to give away to the wealthiest individuals and the wealthiest corporations in this province, and for the working poor you've got nothing. Not one cent of that economic boom goes to the working poor.

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Some of them have used the excuse that it might make us uncompetitive. It still comes as a shock to people to learn that our minimum wage, when you take the exchange rate into account, is now below that of the United States of America. Since you froze the minimum wage in Ontario at \$6.85 in 1995, which is where it was after we raised it for the third time, the United States, our single biggest trading partner, the biggest trading partnership in the world, has raised its minimum wage twice and is looking at doing it a third time.

If you really cared about working people and you wanted to make sure they got a benefit, why not start with those who need it the most instead of always giving all the benefits to those who need them the least, and the crumbs fall through, and in this case not even the crumbs? Nothing for minimum wage. Could any of you live and support a family on that wage? I can't imagine it, but there are people who do and they aren't doing very well. By the time we take into account everything else you've done—killing rent control, the damage you've done to education and the health care system, the number of user fees that are out there—it's mind-boggling what's going on here.

It reminds me of that night in October 1995 when that bill was rammed through here with no public hearings. It's one thing for you to use your democratic majority in the way you see fit, but it's quite another, and unacceptable, for you to use that majority as if you were some kind of tyranny, which is the way it feels tonight. It feels like a tyranny.

I put forward a motion, an amendment, at the hearings. I've got four minutes left, so I'll be quick. Basically I was suggesting that in part XVIII, section 73, where it starts out, "No employer or person acting on behalf of an employer shall intimidate, dismiss or otherwise penalize an employee or threaten to do so, (a) because the employee," and they list a number of things, I wanted to include that they do not agree "to end the hours of his or her work beyond 48 hours in any given week," and that they do not agree "that his or her 30-minute meal break shall be broken into shorter periods," and that they do not agree "to average his or her overtime...." The same with vacation. You said people could say no. All we in the NDP wanted to do was put it in law. Your words mean nothing. It's the law that matters. You wouldn't pass it.

If you believed it, you'd have put it in here. If there was a legal problem with the way it was presented, we could have found another way to do it so that it was spelled out clearly. Because if you don't say it in here, it doesn't matter what you say over there. That's where we are right now. We've got your words versus your law and your law does not spell that out.

But do you know what? This may be the last round for Bill 147 because you've abused your rights of a democratic majority government. You've shut down debate, shut out the people and you're going to ram this through tomorrow. You'll end the debate shortly in another little while, in a few more moments. Then you'll ram it through using your majority tomorrow and you'll think you're done with it. Well, let me tell you: you're not done with it because the reality is that in Ontario today, there ought to be at the very least a 40-hour workweek. Plain, straightforward, simple—40 hours. "You want me to work more than that, it's voluntary and you've got the backup in the law and in the ministry to hold your rights true. You want me to work after 40 hours, I get time and a half from one minute after those 40 hours for every hour I work."

It's not that radical. It's been pointed out that in Europe they've already gone well beyond that.

This business of your parental leave is a right that you only have if you're in a workplace of 50 or more employees. No. Under no condition should any parent have to decide, "My sick child going to the hospital, or my job?" And whether I have that right or not should not depend on whether there are 49 other people working in my workplace or not. That is a right that I should have as a parent.

These are straightforward suggestions. They only appear radical in the light of this right-wing extremism. But let me tell you, we will not give up on this issue. Those of us who are here today will not back away from fighting for the working poor, from fighting for those who are working part-time, students and new Canadians, and all those who want to participate, who want to be a full partner in this province of Ontario. We are not going to surrender fighting for the rights of working people just because you abuse your majority. Be warned.

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Clear the galleries. We will take a 10-minute recess.

The House recessed from 2036 to 2047.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): There are fewer people in the gallery right now than there were just a few minutes ago. But I do want to indicate why I believe, first of all, that we should not be dealing with a time allocation motion all the time in this House and, second, why this particular piece of legislation is ill advised.

As I've indicated on many occasions, I think the success of labour legislation is balance, when both sides—we're talking about management now and labour, those who are the employees—have a feeling that the legislation that is passed is relatively fair to everybody. When you move too far to one side or the other, you tend to engender a lot of justifiable opposition to that legislation.

Obviously, with the presentation of this bill and the indication that the government wishes to push it through using the legislative device that I call closure, or time allocation as it is known in this House, that is something

that makes people in the trade union movement extremely unhappy and extremely uncomfortable.

I want to indicate, though—and I don't do this just to provoke in fun. But very often the Toronto Sun has editorials which are in fact not particularly favourable to the trade union movement. I think for the government it is wise for you to listen, because the Toronto Sun generally supports the government's policy. So when the Sun itself takes the opportunity to criticize you in an editorial on a piece of labour legislation, I would think the government should look long and hard at its own position.

For those media organs which are normally not friendly to the government—and there are some out there who are pretty well not friendly to the government and its legislation—I don't agree necessarily, but I understand when you tend not to pay as much attention, because you feel the source is one which is antagonistic to the government in any event. But here's the Toronto Sun saying—and I want to quote, and I'm going to quote selectively because of time. The editorial doesn't really compliment the government in any way. It says the following:

"Ontario's Tory government should abandon its on-going bid to rush into law far-reaching changes to the Employment Standards Act.

"These changes, which could become law as early as this week, could negatively impact on the working conditions of every employee in Ontario, particularly the most vulnerable.

"Equally worrisome, the amendments, which have already passed second reading in the Legislature, have not been the subject of broad, public consultation or committee hearings at Queen's Park."

It goes on to talk about the bill and its system. "Under this new system, the overtime pay requirement would be radically altered. Overtime hours would be averaged out over a four-week period, in which workers would be allowed to work up to 60 hours per week."

What this means, for example, is that someone could work 60 hours one week, 20 the next and legally receive no overtime pay. The Tories have yet to answer criticism that this really amounts to less pay for equal work, with non-union workers at the low end of the salary scale being the most vulnerable.

"The Mike Harris government held only six days of administrative hearings on this matter in the fall, and has refused all calls to hold formal committee hearings at Queen's Park.

"This is unacceptable.

"The Tories must slow down the process and reintroduce this legislation with the promise of full hearings.

"Ontario workers deserve no less."

I think the counsel and advice of the Toronto Sun editorialist is advice that the government should listen to. On numerous occasions, people who are even favourable to the agenda of this government have said that their criticism is that the government moves too quickly and somewhat like a bull in a china shop, battering people, moving people aside in a bullying fashion. In our democratic process, people may not necessarily be happy with

the final product when they see a piece of legislation passed in this House. But they feel they've had their day in court if the government sits down, holds public hearings and listens. That is particularly true if we see as a result of those public hearings modifications or amendments to the government legislation.

I know this government can push this bill through. It has the power to do so. It has a majority of the seats in the Legislature. It does not govern with a majority of the population of this province who voted, but that's our democratic system; that's the way the system works in Ontario, so it is reflected in the number of seats the government has.

I think the government should be conscious, however, of the fact that it's not simply the people who are in the galleries tonight who are going to be concerned about this bill. In fact, many of the people in the galleries are people who belong to trade unions, who would have the kind of protection that a trade union can elicit through a collective bargaining agreement and through its ability to use the strike as a weapon or the withdrawal of services. What they recognize, and the people they're speaking on behalf of in particular, are the most vulnerable in society, those who do not have the protection of a union, those who do not have what we call a collective agreement, where a large number of people have a contract signed on their behalf and enforced by both sides and by labour legislation in this province.

I am concerned as well when I look at the number of times this government has invoked what I call closure, in other words, closing off the debate. The official term is "time allocation." This afternoon one of Dalton McGuinty's lead questions, as the Leader of the Opposition, was about the use of the time allocation motions or the closure motions. He indicated that the Bill Davis government and Frank Miller used time allocation or closure three times in a certain small number of years; the Peterson government, in power for five years, used it four times; the Rae government, the New Democratic Party government, used it 21 times; and this afternoon, this will be the 64th time this government has invoked closure.

I don't think that's good for the democratic process, when the debate is cut off in that way, but I'm sure there would be even less debate in this House on a voluntary basis if people knew there were going to be meaningful public hearings across the province. I've listened to government members. The member for Hamilton West will well recall the government members who complained about the New Democratic Party government when there was labour legislation that they said they wanted hearings for. Now they have a chance to invoke those hearings on their own labour legislation and they're not prepared to do so.

I notice that essentially what happens is the government has tilted very much in favour of those who fund this government to a very large extent. It's no secret, if one looks at the records that are available to the public, fortunately, that a lot of support for this government

financially comes from the corporate sector. There are many in the corporate sector who are cheering this legislation. Some are not, because some who recognize that stability in the labour market, peace in the labour market, is beneficial to have would not be as enthusiastic about a bill that is seen to be disruptive of that process. But a large number are, and, as has been said on many occasions, this has all the appearances of payback time, that they have demanded this of the government and the government has complied with those who have provided millions upon millions of dollars to the political coffers of the government of Mike Harris.

This is a major step backward. We're into yet another century; we're into the year 2000, closing in on the year 2001. I think when we place people in jeopardy of having to work up to 60 hours a week—I know you say voluntarily, but it really isn't genuinely voluntarily—I think it's a major step backward.

There is apparently a so-called family values coalition within this government. I'll tell you, this is going to have an extremely detrimental effect on the family. If the breadwinners—and very often these days it is both a man and a wife who are the breadwinners in a family; both spouses, the man and the woman in the family, are working. This is going to keep them away from the family. Surely what we need is that contact between the parents and the children, and in fact between two spouses. I consider this to be, then, backward legislation.

Let me say there are components of it that are supportable. I guess that's what's disconcerting. If the government were to split this bill into areas where we in the opposition and I think the general public feel they have a supportable piece of legislation, they would have found that it would have gone through this House quickly, without the use of closure and with the support of the opposition parties. But by putting a hostage in the bill, the hostage largely being the overtime provision, they have ensured that there would be very strong opposition to this particular bill.

So I hope the government will, at the last minute, reconsider. I hope the member for Brockville, himself once a labour leader, or a union boss as he would call him today, would prevail upon his cabinet colleagues to have this legislation reconsidered and reintroduced in a form acceptable to the opposition and the general public.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 11, 2000, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr Klees has moved third reading of Bill 147. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I've received a letter from the chief government whip: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I would request the vote on Bill 147 be deferred until tomorrow at deferred votes." It is so ordered.

LABOUR RELATIONS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Mr Klees, on behalf of Mr Stockwell, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I yield the floor to the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is a pleasure to talk about Bill 139, the workplace democracy act. Right at the outset I'd like to mention that I will be sharing my time with a few other esteemed members from my caucus.

Just a few minutes ago we were discussing another bill, which was also a labour relations bill, the Employment Standards Act, Bill 147. The very experienced, senior member from St Catharines was speaking about that and he mentioned the people in the gallery. I'd just like to state for the record there were no people in the gallery at that moment. Just for the record, there are hardly any people here, otherwise.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): On a point of order, the member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, I know the member would not want to misrepresent what I had said in the House. My point of order is this, Mr Speaker: I was of course making reference to the fact that they were in the gallery previously. If you want—

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Gill: It is a pleasure to talk about this Bill 139, about workplace democracy. Indeed, a lot of people ask, why are we bringing this bill forward? This bill is a commitment we made to the people of Ontario. This government is known to keep its commitments: promises made, promises kept. The strange thing is that in 1994, about a year before the last provincial election, which was held on June 8, 1995, the Mike Harris government brought out a document called the Common Sense Revolution. A lot of people didn't believe that, but at least the people of Ontario had a chance to review the document for about one year. That is a strange thing in political circles.

The reason I say that is because recently we went through a federal election. The federal Liberal government brings out these red books. I'm sure you're aware of what I'm talking about. Three elections ago they brought out a red book which was 200 pages, a very substantial piece of policy matter. As soon as the election was over, they contradicted themselves. They said, "We didn't say all these things," that were in the red book. A year after that, which was 1997, they brought out another red book, and this time the size had diminished. This size was 100 pages. In the year 2000, that book was brought out consisting of 30 pages. That book was brought out

during the election, so once the writ was dropped there was no clear indication of what their policies were.

Contrary to that kind of political manoeuvring, the Mike Harris government spells out what they intend to do. The people of Ontario have every right to exercise their democratic right and, based on what we say, they have a right to choose who they want to represent them, who are their members. I certainly am very honoured that they gave our government, our party, a second, back-to-back majority on June 3, 1999. It's only fair, having done that, that we fulfill those commitments we made to the people. If we don't fulfill those commitments, people have every right to question us, so all this bill does is fulfill the particular commitments that we made to the people of Ontario.

We made a commitment that we will have democracy in the workplace. We felt that during 1990 to 1995, the pendulum in the labour relations field had swung too far to the left. That we found through discussions with people during our election process, and it was only fair to bring some balance into the workplace. We pledged to strengthen the rights of individual workers to decide whether they want to be represented by a union.

What we are doing basically is giving the individual workers their right, and we're making sure that Bill 139 will keep that pledge. It will help promote workplace stability and encourage investment in Ontario's construction industry. I've said it before: the world has become a global economy, if you want to call it that. In these days of a fluid economy, businesses have every right, based on all the free trade agreements we have not only in North America but all over the world, and business people have every right to set up their shop anywhere they like. We want to make sure, from the Mike Harris government's point of view, that they find Ontario the best place to set up their business, so that our workers get the opportunity, our first generation immigrants who have come here, who choose this country as the best place to work, live and raise their families, get the opportunity where they have the right and they can fulfill expectations of their families.

So we are restoring democracy in the workplace, and we're giving the workers the right to choose whether they want to belong to a union or not. We have no problem with unions doing their unionized drives to organize the workplace. The way we are trying to bring stability to the workplace is that we are saying if you have a union drive and you're not successful, then there should be a cooling-off period.

I think it's only fair that a workplace is not being attacked all the time in terms of the union drives. So there should be a 12-month cooling-off period. At the same time, we want to make sure that the workers have the right to decide whether the same union is the right union to continue representing them. They want to have the right, if they so choose, to change that union if that union, they find, is not fulfilling their demands.

A lot of the time, the workers come in and they belong to a union. We have no problem with that. But a lot of the

time their union dues are going to the union bosses. In fact, I think most of them, and if you go back to the Hansard, you'll see that one of the members even acknowledged that the majority of them—and I see nothing wrong with that—are getting much more money than any of the members sitting right here in the House tonight. I'm not denying their right to have that, but I think the workers who are paying union dues should have the right to know where their money is going and if they're getting the best bang for their buck. It's only fair.

This bill, if passed, will also ensure that workers have the knowledge to decertify the unions if they so desire. As we have said before, there is a lot of pressure on the workers, literally bombardment, where the union organisers come in, day in and day out, and they're trying to organize. That's their right. That is their job. That is their livelihood. I have no problem with that. But the employer literally has no right to come in and let the workers know how not to join the union or, if having joined, how to decertify. So we want to make sure, through this bill, if the workers do want to change their union or decertify that union, that that information is clearly posted in the workplace.

I talked about showing the sunshine on the workers' salaries and every year they would have to report to the Ministry of Labour, and it is up to the Ministry of Labour, if it so desires, or the people if somebody under the freedom of information act wants to find out who's getting what, and then they would have the right. It is no different; it is the same as the Public Service Act, where if the people in the public service are getting more than \$100,000, then it should be disclosed to the public and people should know that.

In terms of first contract agreement, let's say the people who are joining the union have a vote. What we are saying through this bill is, if passed, if they reject an agreement, it should not automatically mean that the people want to go on strike. That should be a separate vote. A lot of the time when they are negotiating, and it's standard terms of negotiations, they might want to reject a contract, but that doesn't mean they want to go on strike; maybe they just want to go back and try for a better contract. So that's sort of a right we're going to be giving to the union.

I know other esteemed members want to share some time, so I will leave it at that.

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Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to join in the little time we do have tonight. I plan to share my time with two of my also esteemed, and at times steamed, colleagues, the member from St Catharines and the member from Windsor—

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: Windsor West, thank you. I was going to say Sandwich. That's the other riding.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): Are you the esteemed one?

Mr Agostino: No, I'm just a steamed one.

This legislation in front of us tonight, the second phase of our debate on Bill 139, an amendment to the Labour Relations Act, is part of the ongoing volley of attack that has occurred on the labour movement across this province. Let's look at the background. Let's look at how the minister chose to introduce this. First of all, and it says a lot about them, the setting the government chooses, because the symbols of everything this government does are important. Remember the big box of syringes and the picture of the person shooting up behind the minister when they did the latest round of hot-button politics? What you do is not by accident. You choose your spots, you choose your events, you choose your photo ops quite well, effectively to send out the message you want to send.

Let's look at the message you sent out when this bill was introduced, Bill 139. Remember, it was held at a luncheon at a hotel downtown, basically with employers and management labour lawyers. Basically what you had in the room were employers and lawyers who made a living out of representing management, which is not a bad thing. That's a job. That's an honourable profession. But you chose to introduce the legislation to that group there. That's where you chose to unveil this piece of legislation. I was there and my colleague from Hamilton West, as the NDP labour critic, was there as well. We were allowed in the room—we had to stand at the back, of course, and politely watch the minister give his speech. But many other people who wanted to hear couldn't get in and who wanted to get into the press conference couldn't get in.

So we do this and then we move into another room where the minister does his little private press conference. I remember one of the first questions that was asked of the minister when this bill was brought in was, "Who really asked for this legislation?" He hemmed and hawed and said, "Well, business did." OK, he was quite honest about it. It was a business piece of legislation. Then the minister was asked to give specific examples of what brought this about, what the problems were in the workplace that necessitated bringing about this piece of legislation. After about two or three minutes, the minister couldn't give an answer, so one of the reporters asked, "Maybe the Wal-Mart certification drive?" and he said, "Yes, yes," but then he was reminded that he had already brought in a bill to deal with that. Clearly there is no question that this is a made-for-business piece of legislation.

Let me just read you something. I'll take a quote from an article in the Hamilton Spectator. I know the gentleman well—a prominent businessman, someone I certainly know in the city of Hamilton—Shawn Chamberlain, president of the Hamilton and District Chamber of Commerce. He was "enthusiastic." I'll quote what was said by the president of the Hamilton chamber of commerce about this piece of legislation. "This is pretty much everything we asked for. It's true there's nothing in here for labour." That says it all as to what has driven this legislation. So clearly this was not legislation to help.

You listen to the parliamentary assistant to the minister and he talks about workplace democracy, he talks about choices for workers, he talks about options for workers, he talks about choosing the union you want. This is a wish list from Bay Street. This legislation was not drafted in the Premier's office or in the cabinet room; this was drafted in the boardrooms on Bay Street and handed over to the Premier at one of the fundraising dinners. He handed it over to the Minister of Labour, and the Minister of Labour's marching orders came in and brought this legislation. That's where we're at today.

Again let me remind you, and I know it sounds like a familiar tune with this government, but once again, this piece of legislation has not had one single moment of public hearings. Not for one second has this bill been presented to the public for feedback. The last piece of legislation basically affected five million non-unionized workers. This piece of legislation that follows not only makes it difficult for those five million folks to get organized and unionized, but then it makes it easier for unions to be broken up and it makes certification drives much more difficult.

I'll just read part of another article in the *Spectator*. It says:

"Under changes to the Labour Relations Act, which Minister Chris Stockwell unveiled to a seminar of employers yesterday, it will be easier for them to fight union organizing drives and harder for workers to start such campaigns.

"The package, Stockwell admitted in a later interview, was designed exclusively for the interests of employers and contains none of the proposals to the act submitted by labour leaders during a ... public consultation process in August."

So in August you went out with this white paper and selectively spoke to some people, you spoke to some labour folks. They gave you a whole bunch of different ideas to put in the bill. You totally ignored anything they said, but you put in everything that business wanted, and then once you put that bill here, you didn't take it back out to them and ask, "Now what do you think?"

This is a joke. It's an absolute joke to suggest that this bill has had any kind of significant public consultation. You talk about democracy, and this is supposed to be workplace democracy. This is so undemocratic, how you've rammed this bill through the House. You had a couple of hours on second reading. We had 20 minutes at committee to deal with some of your amendments. You're here for two hours tonight, and that's the end of the bill. You've brought closure in. This is one of the 64 closures that my leader, Dalton McGuinty, talked about today. You've brought it in for this bill, and as of tomorrow afternoon at 1:45 or 2:00, this bill becomes law. This is ironic, and I use that word because parliamentary decorum does not allow me to use other words to explain how, clearly, this is not workplace democracy; that is the last thing they want to talk about. There isn't democracy in here, and this bill certainly doesn't allow democracy in the workplace.

When you look at some of the specifics, it's cute. The salary packages of union leaders exceeding \$100,000 are to be made public. Well, big deal. I have not heard one union leader across this province criticize that part of it. That's great. Most of them, you'll be surprised to realize, don't make anywhere near \$100,000, certainly nowhere near what a cabinet minister and nowhere near what an MPP would make had your 42% increase gone through the House.

Mr Bradley: Or the assistants to the ministers.

Mr Agostino: Of course, or the senior staff in the Premier's office and the minister's office; they got a whopping 33% increase.

You'll be surprised to find out that the union leaders certainly make nowhere near that amount of money.

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: I've got to explain this to you. This is interesting. The Minister of Transportation talked about a \$2,000—

Hon Mr Turnbull: This is the guy who wanted \$200,000.

Mr Agostino: I'm glad to have the opportunity to clarify this. At the Board of Internal Economy, the Minister of Transportation talked about a \$2,000 amount that was allowed for members to claim on their global budget for events in their riding. Let me remind the member that the motion was moved by Mr Doug Galt, the member from Northumberland on the Tory side of the House, and the record of the Board of Internal Economy shows that. I wish the Minister of Transportation would read that before he gets up and makes comments such as that, that he knows are inaccurate once again.

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: I'm glad the Minister of Labour has finally come out of the bunker and is going to join us for the rest of the debate here tonight. Welcome, sir.

When you look at this piece of legislation, they talk about democracy and fairness. Employers will be allowed to post notices in the plants outlining the process for decertifying a union. When you look at it, what they are saying is this: if you're a unionized shop, what happens is that the employer will then be allowed to post in a public way—maybe big four-by-eight billboards with flashing lights, whatever the government chooses as appropriate. But the employer will be able to put out notices on how to decertify. They talk about fairness and balance. We've said to the government a number of times, "If this is fair, then would it not be fair?"—

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: I'm glad my colleague is heckling me.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Windsor West, come to order.

Mr Agostino: Speaker, thank you for bringing her to order.

Would it not be fair, if you allow the decertification notices to go up, if this government then mandated that where there isn't a union, you would allow the certification notices to go up as well so non-unionized workers

would know what the process is for getting organized? That would be fair and balanced. But of course you won't do that, because your business friends don't want you to do that. That's not balance. That's simply catering to the whims of big business, which caters to this government's fundraisers, comes to their events, buys money, lobbies them and, frankly, tells the government what to do. They listened to their marching orders once again with this piece of legislation.

Then they say that unions negotiating their first contract now will be required to hold separate ratification and strike votes. What you're saying to union members—they talk about unions and union bosses. That is what this is all about, according to the government. The reality is this: this legislation impacts working people and working families. When you bring in this kind of legislation, you don't attack union bosses, as you call them. We call them union leaders; we call them people who get elected democratically by their members to represent their workers.

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Do you know what? You make their jobs easier by beating up on workers so much because the need for them is even greater. What is sad is that you're attacking working families and working people. These are the people you're impacting with this piece of legislation.

What they're now saying is that members become unionized, they negotiate and they go to first contract. The biggest weapon a union and the members have is the ability to strike. That is the balance of power, to some degree, that you have, that you can strike and hurt the employer that way if there's not a fair, negotiated agreement. What the government says now is that on first contract, you have to take separate votes. So you take away the ability to give the clout the union needs to continue to negotiate, because what is there left to negotiate? What you're saying is, reject the contract. OK, let's go back to the bargaining table and go on for ever and ever because you're now going to take away the right of a strike vote on the first contract.

Then, you look at some of the other bizarre—this thing has so many nutbar, wacky ideas, you wonder what southern state they dug it up out of because surely it's not progressive labour legislation in Ontario.

There's a section in there when it comes to municipal sector contracts, hospitals, public sector contracts, where they're going to allow greater opportunity for non-unionized companies to bid for jobs. What's going to happen now is the opportunity for companies to come in and pay lower wages, have unsafe working conditions, lower benefits. They're going to be able to come in and undercut the ability of workers who are represented by unions, and instead of driving people or driving wages to a point of better wages, better working conditions and better safety, what you're doing is you're going to drive to the lower denominator here.

So a company comes in. Of course they can pay lower wages and have fewer benefits and fewer concerns about safety. Sure, they may outbid a unionized company, but who benefits from that? How does the worker benefit?

The government and the minister make an argument that this is intended to save taxpayers' money. The minister says, "If it's a school or a hospital, it's a saving to taxpayers, so they get a lower deal." That's a phony argument but put that aside. Not only have they included municipalities, hospitals, universities and schools, but they've included banks. Banks are now protected by this, those poor corporations that are hurting, those banks that are only making \$2 billion or \$3 billion a year of profit. They now are protected by Premier Harris and Minister Stockwell when companies come in and bid for their contracts. Those poor banks need the help of Mike Harris. They're crying out for help. They're desperate. They're not charging enough for user fees. They're not charging enough to the average person who has to wait in line or go to a bank machine to withdraw their money and they get charged \$1.50 or a \$1.25. Those banks are not making enough money. They need Mike Harris to protect them, or is it that Mike Harris needs them to spend \$25,000 a table at their fundraising dinner? Is that maybe what's driving this?

Maybe someone can explain to me why banks should be included under this umbrella of municipalities. When was the last time banks used taxpayers' dollars to expand or grow? They can use the billions of dollars they're making in profit. They don't need the protection of this government. Protect the consumers, not the banks. But consumers don't come to your fundraisers. They don't lobby you, but the banks do. That is the most bizarre part of this legislation and if the government was serious—

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: Somebody said, "No, it's not." I would appreciate one of the members who's going to speak for the government sometime this evening explaining to me why banks are included in this category, what rationale there would be for including municipalities, hospitals and school boards.

Mr Bradley: Big donations to the Tories.

Mr Agostino: Absolutely. As my colleague for St Catharines said, big donations to the Conservative Party. Some \$25,000 a table. You're sitting in circles of 10, the inner circle of the fundraising club at \$25,000 a pop and then you get protected by this government.

This is nothing more than another attack on working families, on working people across Ontario. It is a big business agenda. It's an agenda that is made by Bay Street. This clearly is a wish list for everything that Bay Street's asked for, for everything big—I'm not surprised. I understand. The Ministry of Labour is here and in many ways I feel for him because he's a man of great integrity, but I understand that he doesn't call the shots any more in labour. That's the problem. The problem is that the minister no longer has control of the labour—the old Chris Stockwell, the old Minister of Labour, would have stood up to the Premier and said, "No, this is wrong. We're not going to do it," but unfortunately, Guy Giorno and Mike Harris, give the minister the marching orders. The minister comes and marches into the Legislature and they say to him, "If you don't agree, we're just going to take away the keys to your limo."

It's unfortunate the minister has to choose between the keys to the limo and bringing in this regressive legislation, because I know in his heart of hearts he believes this is wrong. I know he's a fair man and would never, of his own will, bring this in. It's unfortunate that Mike Harris has forced the minister to capitulate and bring in this anti-worker, anti-family legislation.

This is bad legislation. This is legislation that does not help working men and women, that does not help working families across Ontario. It surely does nothing more than help Mike Harris' corporate friends.

One final note tonight that is even sadder: this allows a greater opportunity for non-unionized work sites, for non-unionized construction sites, and we know what the track record is. Let me remind this government again, on a very sombre note, that last year, out of 20 people who died on construction sites across Ontario, 18 were non-unionized sites. That is not an opinion; that is a fact.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Where is that report, by the way?

Mr Agostino: If the Minister of Labour wants to doubt that, maybe he should speak to the families of those 20 dead men who died on construction sites across Ontario last year and ask them where that report is. Ask them why their husbands or fathers or sons died on a construction site last year—18 out of 20 in non-unionized construction sites. I challenge the Minister of Labour to come in with information that doesn't show us that 20 men died last year, and that 18 of them died in non-unionized sites. Show us that.

That report is in the hearts and minds of those 20 families who lost a husband or a son or a father, and if the minister wants to question that, go ahead and question those families. Tell them it's wrong. Maybe they imagined their partner, their husband, their father or their son has died. Maybe they just imagined that.

That is the sad reality, part of what this legislation is going to contribute to. It is not a proud moment tonight for this Legislature. This is the second piece of bad, anti-family, anti-worker, anti-working people legislation they're bringing in tonight.

They're going to win the vote tonight. They won the previous vote. They'll win the next vote that comes in. They'll ram through, in the next two to two and a half years, whatever they want. Fortunately, in two and a half years those 5 million working people who are affected by the first bill and the millions of working people who are affected by this bill, the millions of working people who are affected by those two bills, are going to get a chance to speak. I tell you, they will send a clear message to this government. They will send a message that's loud and clear that you can't go on and attack working people in Ontario.

You'll get away with it for two and a half years, but I'm telling you, they will pay a hell of a political price at the ballot box in two and a half years. That will be the revenge of working people in this province. Two and a half years, we get rid of these guys, and help will be on the way with a Liberal government.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure for me to rise tonight and speak to the legislation at hand. I was engaging a little bit with the members opposite before we came on camera. They're disappointed about their loss in the last election, lamenting that defeat, and not remembering what percentage of votes they had and we had. They were off on their numbers, as is their wont, as they usually are when they're talking about any numbers at all.

I want to address the member for Hamilton East who got up and did his usual rant about a government bill and not being able to find, he claims, anything that makes any sense in the government bill. If anyone ever wants to go back and look at this member's speeches over the years, you'll find pretty much the same rhetorical lines used over and over again about every single government bill, whether it be labour or education or health or anything else. We're familiar with the rant. One of the comments he made was, "Why would banks be included in the provision"—there's a provision in the legislation that says many municipalities now that have used unionized construction in the past under this bill will no longer have to be stuck with those provisions and be forced to use union labour only.

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Mr Agostino: Talk about the banks.

Mr Maves: I'm going to talk about the banks, I say to the member opposite. Stay in your seat tonight, please.

Municipalities and school boards are the people we talked about in this legislation. Most often the minister talks about the fact that through using, once or twice, some unionized labour, all of a sudden that school board and that municipality forevermore has to use unionized construction labour workers for anything. This minister has said no, that's not fair. Their principal—the member opposite is not listening. He asked for an explanation and he's getting it; he's not listening. The municipality's and the school board's principal function is not construction and they have no opportunity to be a party to the negotiations of labour-wide construction agreements. That's the construction companies, the construction employers and the construction unions and that school board and that municipality have no chance of being involved in that negotiation process.

Similarly, banks in the past, in effect—I know the TD bank happened to use some unionized labour to do some very minor renovation work. As this went through the Labour Relations Act—the member opposite is starting to pay a little attention—the labour board, I believe it was, ruled that forevermore that bank had to be bound to using, in any construction work they did in the province of Ontario, unionized labour. If the principle involved here—I know the member opposite has a problem with that; it doesn't necessarily have anything to do with banks, because there are other businesses involved in this. For instance, the Second Cup Coffee Co went out and used unionized labour, and all of a sudden they were caught. They had to use nothing but unionized construction labour on any job they did.

We said fundamentally this is unfair; this makes no sense. As I said before, the Second Cup company is not party to province-wide negotiations on construction agreements, so why would they be bound by those construction contracts and be forced to use unionized labour forever more? They shouldn't be, clearly. It's one of the most logical, obvious, straightforward parts of this bill, yet the member opposite likes to engage in the rhetoric of, "The banks are bad people and people don't like banks because they don't like user charges." That's not the point. It's got nothing to do with the fact that it's banks. We could have talked about the Second Cup company or any other company whose principal business is not construction.

The member opposite has totally ignored what I've told him. He asked for an explanation and I gave him a very thorough and clear explanation. He hasn't paid any attention to it. It's not surprising.

Again, for the folks at home who did happen to pay attention, if your business is not principally a construction business, you are not bound just by the fact that you perhaps hired a unionized electrician to come in and do some work or a carpenter to come in and do some work in your company. You are no longer forever bound to use only unionized labour. It's common sense. I think people listening at home and the average Ontario citizen can certainly understand that, and I'm sure does.

Another part of this bill is the sunshine law. We already have sunshine laws on paying benefits for the public sector, the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, and large companies. Publicly held companies have to disclose salary and benefit packages for their managers. This follows along the same lines, where this act will require the disclosure of annual salaries and benefits over \$100,000 of all officers, employees of parent and local trade unions in Ontario, as well as teachers' associations and employee associations in the fire, police and college sectors.

I remember a few years ago Mr Gilchrist brought forward a bill, a sunshine law that if publicly traded companies were subject to this and the public sector came under this sunshine law, surely it was not a problem if the labour unions were also subject to this. After all, once you become a member of a labour union, why shouldn't you have a right to have full disclosure of the salaries and benefits of the managers in your union, that you're paying? The members opposite quite often say it's not necessary because they already provide that disclosure. Then they shouldn't have anything to worry about, is the response to that. This law will cover anyone when they don't have that opportunity—

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just wanted to see if you thought we had a quorum.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Could the table check for a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Speaker: The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Maves: It's actually kind of awkward speaking to empty benches across the way. I'm glad some of the members opposite are now filing back into the room. After a certain amount of time you get used to the heckling from across the way. When the benches are empty and there's nothing coming over, sometimes it's a little disconcerting. So I'm glad some of the members are now coming back on the other side of the floor.

What other parts of this bill are important to note? There's a decertification provision where right now members of a union, if they're unsatisfied with that union, can decertify. They can only decertify in a very narrow window, a 60-day period at the end of, for instance, a three-year contract. We're widening that window by 30 days. Some of us on this side of the floor might think that should be an even wider window than a 90-day provision at the end of a contract, but the minister has agreed to widen that window a little bit. Perhaps it's an odd occasion, but for those employees who are dissatisfied with their union and do want to decertify, they should have an opportunity, ample opportunity, to do so. It's only fair and it enhances their democratic right to belong or not belong to a union in their workplaces.

Another part of this bill which I think is rather important and maybe gets short shrift is a one-year bar. Right now in a workplace if a union comes in and attempts to organize a workplace, they have a wide scope of things they can do. They try to talk employees into signing certification cards and then ultimately, if there's a vote, into voting in favour of a union. They have a wide scope of how they can in effect lobby those workers to become members of the union and vote for a union in that workplace. The problem with that—it's not a problem that someone tries to unionize a workplace; we're not trying to stop that whatsoever. But one knows that the practical effect of a union drive is a little bit disruptive to a workplace because you have outside agents coming in and trying to organize. The employees may not want anything to do with it, but those paid union organizers are there on a regular basis trying to organize a workplace and it's somewhat disruptive. The employer is very nervous and there are very tight restrictions on employers in Ontario and what they're allowed to say to their staff when they're under a union organization drive. It's a very difficult time and I think anyone, whether you're an employee or an employer, would talk about the difficulty, the great deal of tension that can exist in the workplace when there's an organization drive.

What we've said in this legislation is that basically you can only attempt an organization drive once in a 12-month period. So if, I don't know, CUPE 100 goes out and tries to organize a workplace and for several months they're trying to sign up cards, they get enough to take it to a vote, they go to a vote and they lose the vote: the workers decide no, we don't want that union or perhaps any other union in the workplace. Then presently, the

very next day, CUPE 101, the local in the next town, could begin an organization drive and start the process all over again. That tension in the workplace continues. Again, after that vote is carried out, after CUPE 101 loses, I believe there's nothing stopping CUPE 102 the very next day from again beginning that process. Eventually, those employees might just be worn down and say, "I give up. I'm going to vote for the union."

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That's not really the way the democratic process should work. We believe that if someone comes in and does a union organization drive and they abide by all the rules and try to educate the workers as to the service they want to provide as a union, and the employer says the very limited things that he or she is allowed to say when there is a union drive going on, and then a vote is held and that vote is in the negative for the union and they're not successful in organizing that workplace, then for a year after that, no union, whether it be CUPE 101 or 102 or an OPSEU union or somebody else, can go in and attempt to organize that workforce. That's for one year. After that, anyone can come in again and begin the process all over again and try to organize the workplace.

This is just bringing fairness to the workplace. It's bringing democracy to the workplace. Two sides had their say, they had a vote and the vote is finalized, and then there is a 12-month period until someone can attempt to organize that workforce and have a union in that workplace. We think that's inherently fair. I think it's inherently logical. The members opposite will engage in their rhetoric and tell you why it's an attack on labour and a wild and crazy scheme, but I think it's eminently reasonable.

From 1995 to 1999, most of our legislation, we believe, was very reasonable and sound, and the members opposite, for every piece of legislation we brought in, would usually go on and on about, "The sky is falling," and how it would be a terrible piece of legislation and there would be work stoppages throughout the province, and of course the opposite has happened over the past five years. I believe the comments from the members opposite and their dire predictions about the world coming to an end and the economy in Ontario coming to an end will not come true. So I'm happy to endorse this bill and congratulate, in fact, the Minister of Labour for a lot of the hard work he did on this bill.

Mr Bradley: I wish to speak in opposition to this piece of legislation this evening. Again, I think the main reason most people in the province would find it to be not supportable is that it is not a balanced piece of labour legislation.

A classic example of this is the provision about the posting of whether one can eliminate a union or not, and the word we use is "decertification." It's something I think is very concerning to members of the trade union movement. What the people in the labour union movement look for, as well as others, is balance in the legislation.

If there is one general critical analysis one can make of government legislation, it is that it hasn't been bal-

anced. So many of the bills this government presents do not represent a balance of opinion in the province. If you are from the corporate sector, if you attend the huge fundraisers—you don't, because you're independent as Speaker at this time, Mr Speaker, but you must read in the newspapers of the huge dinners they have for the Premier. I know in Niagara it's a sellout all the time. They have it at the Parkway complex in St Catharines, now the Ramada Parkway. They have the Premier's dinner, and the member for Niagara Falls is there and the member for Erie-Lincoln, and they sashay around looking important at the dinner, and everybody bows at the feet of the Premier as he goes around. They want to touch the cape almost.

I can tell you that many in that crowd would like this legislation. They don't want a balanced approach. But there are a lot of people out there who do want a balanced approach to legislation. So when the government says you must post in every workplace how to decertify a union, then one would anticipate, if there were balance, that they would post in the workplace how to certify a union. That's fair and that's balanced. I don't think people could complain if you would do both. Either you do neither or you do both. But what the government has chosen to do is very provocative in that it says you're going to post how to decertify a union in every union workplace. That is provocative. There are some people who I think are quite enlightened out there in the field who say, "This government is toying with disrupting the province again."

You would be familiar with the peace plan, as the—I almost said "Premier"—Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty, introduced it. It was a plan to bring stability and peace back to education, because one of the major problems in education now is, in fact, labour relations. There have been times in years gone by where there was concern about certain labour challenges that have been made by one side or the other in the field of education, but by and large those have been ironed out. There was never an opinion that a government was particularly picking on the education community.

We see in that specific instance a genuine feeling among members of the teaching profession, and I think among many trustees, that the government of Ontario was looking to pick a fight. Of course, you can pick a fight if you want to. The purpose of that is to divert attention from other issues. Major environmental problems that exist in the province, health care problems—virtually any problem that can exist in the province is often overshadowed when the government picks a fight with one particular segment of the community or another.

Just as we have proposed a peace plan to bring stability back to education, to bring some certainty back to education, to make people feel as though they are wanted in the field of education—because genuinely, most teachers I know are not interested in engaging in the political process on an active basis, on a daily basis, and would prefer to worry about and concern themselves with the progress of the students for whom they have a specific responsibility.

The government will reject that. The Minister of Education shouts across, as some people do in the House from time to time within the tolerance of the Speaker of the House. Her answers are sharp; her answers are confrontational. I would have thought the government, as it has in some other cases—and I compliment the government when it does this—would have stolen the idea. Maybe when the session is over, so they don't have to give credit to Dalton McGuinty or the Liberal caucus, the government will think this over and decide that's a way of solving the problem.

You will remember some of the promises that were made in regard to the hiring of nurses in this province. When the Liberal Party made a commitment, Mike Harris would take that commitment, add some to it and then, of course, claim it as his own. That's OK. I don't mind that in the process; I really don't. I think imitation is certainly something that one can be proud of, when somebody takes an idea from the opposition and implements it as government. We had an example today. Rick Bartolucci, the member for Sudbury, brought forward a bill to deal with child prostitution. The government took the bill, or at least a portion of it, called it its own bill, and will proceed with it sometime in the future. There's nothing wrong with that. I can be critical of how long it took, I can be critical of the fact that they simply didn't pass the Bartolucci bill, but I would rather be positive about it and say they took an idea from the opposition and implemented it.

The problem we have with the labour legislation is that there is an agenda there. I'd like to think there isn't. I'm not one who deals in conspiracy theories, that somehow people are out to get people, but quite obviously this government is heading in a direction which will produce labour confrontation in this province. That may make the Premier happy, to know that he can fight with somebody else other than individual members of his caucus, but I don't think it's productive for this province.

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What I'd like to see is a more moderate stance taken by the Premier. That doesn't mean the government can't implement policies. It simply means that the government does so in a balanced way, in a more consensual way, rather than a confrontational way. Ultimately decisions will have to be made, but what's important as well is if the people who are directly affected by these decisions feel they've had their day in court. As I mentioned with an earlier labour bill, one of the problems is that, as with this bill, there are no public hearings of any significance at all.

The process in this House is breaking down. Today we had a member, one of the Acting Speakers, who resigned his position in the Legislature this afternoon. I know him to be a person who is very committed to the field of dealing with poorer people in this province, people who are disadvantaged in terms of their economic status in this province. Seeing the government attack this particular group time and time again and seeing the government utilize the tool of cutting off debate, the closure of

debate—they call it time allocation here—for the 64th time today, is obviously going to tell us that our Legislature is not working as it should.

I have been expressing this view for some period of time, that almost on a yearly basis, the powers of individual members of this Legislature are eroded by people in the backroom who want to make it easier for the government to get its legislation through. The member for Grey-Owen Sound brought a bill in today. He talked about his concerns with the democratic process. He wanted free votes in the House. I can assure him that will not happen because Guy Giorno will not allow it to happen, and he knows that.

Nevertheless, what's as important as the bill itself is the expression by the member of his concern as an individual in this Legislature that an elected official has eroded power, compared perhaps to when he was first elected to the Legislature. We've seen this with the continuous rule changes. That always makes editors say to the people who are here at Queen's Park covering it, "People don't want to talk about rule changes." That's why procedural rules are easier to change, but they mean so much to this Legislature.

Some day those on the government side will be on the opposition side. That's something that's almost inevitable in democracy and they will understand better what happens when you change those rules, just as the election rules were changed to favour the governing party, just as the rules for making contributions to political parties were changed to allow corporations, unions and individuals to make larger contributions to individuals and parties, and to spend more during a campaign and to exempt more from campaigns.

My concern is that with the changes in the rules, with the utilization of those changes to the advantage of the government, the Ontario Legislature has become a much less relevant place today than when I entered this Legislature in 1977, when the Honourable Russell Rowe was the Speaker, succeeded by the Honourable Jack Stokes who passed away just this year.

I know my colleague from Windsor West wishes to offer some observations on this piece of legislation. I think she will come to the same conclusion I have, that it simply lacks the balance you need in labour legislation. That's what makes things tick in Ontario. That's why the Davis government and its predecessors, the Robarts and Frost governments, were successful in this province. They understood the meaning of the word "balance" and they understood the meaning of the word "fairness," so that even those who disagreed with the government and did not vote for it at election time felt the government was at least prepared (a) to listen, and (b) to accept some of the suggestions of those outside the confines of the Premier's office.

With that, I will relinquish my time and allow someone else to speak.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I am happy to speak once again to this bill. I guess my greatest concern is, as the Minister of Labour passed through the

House earlier and said, "That same old story again." What has transpired between the second reading of this bill and the final reading of the so-called workplace democracy bill he brought into this House is that nothing's changed. Nothing happened between second reading and third reading. Ordinarily we would have had public hearings. Ordinarily we would have gone on the road to talk to various communities, and in those individual communities, various groups representing all the very many facets of a community: labour leaders, employers, everyone who has something to say about the workplace.

That did not happen. There's some so-called white paper. I remember when the Minister of Labour snuck into my riding with no advance notice to the local member. Of course it was during constituency week and we were hardly able at the drop of a hat to be available all day to listen. But he came to Windsor and he got an earful, because despite very little notice, people in my community said, "This stuff isn't any good. This isn't stuff we asked for or is helpful to us in the workplace." So we asked the minister again, as we did on an earlier bill tonight, who brought this forward? When the minister was asked this by the media after its introduction, he couldn't answer the question, only that once again the Premier's ear was bent by the corporate community to say, "Here are more things you can do to try to union-bust."

It would be interesting to see a member like Chris Stockwell come from a community like mine, where even in Windsor West, my riding, which is probably known by most of the members of the House as quite a union town, there is not a large percentage of our workforce that's unionized. There's quite a bit of it that is not unionized. Those that are not, that don't have a negotiated contract that sets out what those working conditions are going to be, are wholly reliant on what the standards for employees and employers are according to acts of Parliament.

That's when this kind of information becomes quite relevant. This clearly is about whether you can or cannot organize a union in the shop. We see in this bill, all of a sudden, that we now we have information that forces them to post on a bulletin board, in a unionized shop, how to decertify. It probably outlines the parameters of that kind of notice: an 8½-by-11 sheet of paper. Does it talk about how many inches in terms of height the text has to be? I ask all the silk suits sitting behind the benches watching—this silk suit right here who is probably making more money than most of us sitting in the House—did you come up with this creature in this bill?

Why, in the same breath, if it's about democracy, are we not posting information about how to unionize a workforce? Why do we just need to talk about how to decertify the union, if you want to be fair, this so-called workplace democracy?

What about this sunshine law for the union leaders? Have you not heard the stump speech by Buzz Hargrove? Everyone else on the planet has. You could just buy his book. He talks about how much he makes for a living. He's over \$100,000. He's outwardly talking about—

The Speaker: Sorry for the interruption. A point of order?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The present member speaking should be directing her remarks to you, not to a member of the gallery.

The Speaker: The member, I'm sure, knows that.

Mrs Papatello: It's Anthony in the silk suit in the back, who is actually enjoying this. He doesn't get that kind of notoriety, seeing as he's probably put pen to paper to devise the language in this bill and probably makes more money than Buzz Hargrove. But back to my point: Buzz Hargrove tells the world how much he makes for a living. Do you know why? Because he's proud of the fact that he makes that much money. Do you know why? Because he works hard for everything he does on behalf of the CAW. He doesn't need a sunshine law in this bill to tell people how much he makes. He's proud of it. Moreover, in a democratic union like the CAW, they have every right to toss him out of his position if they don't like the work he's doing. That's called democracy. That is something this government knows very little about.

We used to watch Chris Stockwell. We recall that even in my early days, which were only in 1995, the first year I was here, Stockwell used to be seated at the far corner of this Legislature and he used to be one of the most flamboyant speakers, outspoken even against his own party if required. But boy, have things changed. There he is jumping on the wagon of the Premier, getting pulled along by the nose. You put the facts in front of him and say, "Hey, you're the Minister of Labour. You're the one who's supposed to be looking out for employees in this province. What are you doing listening just to the corporate community? What kind of responsibility is that?" That's the thing that I guess rubs me in the worst way, that of all the cabinet ministers in this government, there is one who's assigned to look out for employees, one who's assigned to say for everybody who works in Ontario who's beholden to the acts of Parliament for the kind of workplace conditions they're going to have. It's the Minister of Labour. He's the guy who pounds the cabinet table to say, "Hey, wait a minute. All those business ministers, all the ones who are out for corporate Ontario, how does this affect people who work in Ontario?" He's the guy. I ask the cabinet ministers who are here in the House, how many times has this labour minister stood up and said, "Hey, wait a minute. Let's see what kind of effect this is going to have on employees?" I'll bet he hasn't said it once.

2200

Here's the guy who used to just be the rogue of the Conservative Party, the bravado, the big, flamboyant Speaker, even against his own party when need be. As a Speaker, the current Speaker will well remember, he often chastized the Conservative Party, as has our current Speaker, for behaviour that is not befitting a government. But now there he is just jumping along like the rest of them, not doing what he knows is right, so that what? He

gets the driver and he gets the added income of being a cabinet minister. I don't know how much that is worth. The fact is that if one individual is hard done by because of his legislation, that's his responsibility.

So we go back to the detail of this workplace democracy, the two that are so strikingly anti-union, and we have to ask the question, in all the time that this party has been in office we have had unprecedented economic growth. We have had, by and large, a very good economic boom, yet in the same breath we have had more workplace unsettling because of the government meddling in their affairs. We had days of action, we had labour protests from the day they took office in 1995, just one torrent of bills, one after another, that were only there to slam the labour movement—not because it needed to be done; we were in economic prosperity. Only now, after five years, are we starting to see a slowdown that way. When you see posted signs everywhere for help wanted, when employers at any time in the last five years since I've been in the House actually have to improve working conditions in order to keep their employees, here's a government, that's supposed to lead in the field, actually working against the tide.

I ask the members opposite who stood to speak to the bill to tell me something that actually is good that comes out of this bill. Here's the second labour bill that we're talking about tonight and there isn't a thing we can find inside that actually belongs to the employee community that said, knocking on the minister's door, "This is what we need to make it a better place." Of all the things this labour minister could have done to look out for injured workers, of which my riding has many, and he talks about some fancy new title for workers' comp. In the end, you know what it is? It's workers' comp. It's slow and it's grinding and it's bureaucratic and you don't have enough people there to help injured workers get their cases through on time. In my community, with all those other added features of what this government has done to our health system where I come from, an individual, for example, an injured worker, can't move forward on their case without a doctor's certificate. Guess what? We don't have enough doctors, and these injured workers can't get their application in because they can't get them signed by a doctor.

Of all the other things that this government has done to affect my community, it all comes down to an injured worker who can't even get his application processed because he doesn't have a family doctor. But that's not this minister's responsibility. He has been busy answering to the corporate community. This is what is just so telling about the government, that if there's any member out there in that cabinet who should be looking out for employees, it's that one. It's that one, who dares to come to my community with a white paper and ask their opinion. Every single one, without fail, told him, "No, we don't like it. We don't agree with it. We don't see the value of it." None of that information has appeared in any of the labour bills.

We say again, do we need to buy fundraising tickets to the Mike Harris dinners in order to have a bill placed

before the House to benefit that particular group? That's the only thing that drives the government. It's all about money, and it's all about money to the Conservative Party. Based on the amount of money you spent in the last election, you should have won a much bigger win than you did. That should give you a moment of pause.

That's all we have to say about this particular bill. I am very happy to be opposed to the bill and I look forward to the day that there might be some kind of enlightenment when it comes to looking out for employees in Ontario. The people who drive Ontario ought to be better taken care of than under this regime.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): The first thing that comes to mind when I think about this bill is the presidential debates, where the one candidate turned to the other one and all he had to say was one simple line. He said it two or three times, and they were major knockout blows. That was, "Here we go again." That's exactly what we've got here: "Here you go again."

Interjection: "There you go again."

Mr Christopherson: You guys know your quotes good. All right. "There he goes again," was probably the exact quote. It was Reagan and Carter. I didn't want to mention that I was quoting Reagan; that's really what I was trying to avoid. However, the point is the same nonetheless. He used that line and it served him very well, and I use it to point out that here we go again.

It was just a couple of hours ago—it's six or seven minutes after 10, six days before Christmas. We just dealt with a labour bill that will negatively impact, in our opinion, millions of people. We had no public hearings. We had time allocation that took us out of debate at second reading and threw us into committee for what was even supposed to be an hour but, as memory serves, because we were late getting to committee and late getting started, ended up being about six minutes per caucus: six minutes for a bill not as long as the ESA—22 pages—but just as devastating in its own way, and it's not the first time. It just keeps happening over and over.

I believe the game plan here, as much as part of your game plan, your communication strategy in the first term was to overwhelm people with so many wars happening on so many fronts—that never happened before you came into power. We didn't have a health crisis and all kinds of legislation there, an education crisis and all kinds of legislation there; social services, environment, labour. You just had them rolling, rolling, rolling, and there was no time—and you knew that—for people to adequately research the bill, to make a cohesive, intelligent submission to the committee, because the thing was being rammed through so fast. And you know what? Even if they had taken the time, they were never given the opportunity. Twice it's happening today. Twice you're going after workers, going after their rights, whether it's as individuals or through their union. You've got major pieces of legislation, ramming them through.

When I look at who's here in the House right now on the government side—and I won't name names—as I look and I project, because I've been on this side of the

House and I've been on that side of the House, I can just imagine what my friend in the Tory backbenches whom I'm looking at right now would say if we did this.

Mr Wettlaufer: Name me.

Mr Christopherson: I was trying to cover the fact that I didn't know your riding.

Mr Wettlaufer: Kitchener Centre.

Mr Christopherson: Kitchener Centre. Sorry.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Well, I was trying to do him a favour. The Christmas season is getting the better of me.

I know what you would do if you were dealing tonight with a second piece of legislation that really spoke to you in a serious way. I don't know what that issue might be because I don't know you that well, but it's not hard to imagine that someone like you would feel strongly, emotionally, about the fact that there were major pieces of legislation being put through and the public wasn't getting a say and you didn't get a fair shake as an opposition member. I can just imagine you going totally apoplectic. Me, and the way I am in this House, I would be the poster boy of appropriate behaviour compared to the way you would be if this happened, and that goes for you too, O'Toole.

2210

I want to reflect on—and it's already been mentioned by my colleague from Hamilton East, but I want to mention it anyway because it needs to be underscored and I was the other person in this House who was there and I want my evidence, if you will, to be in the Hansard also. It was at the Toronto Convention Centre. We weren't invited. The Minister of Labour didn't notify us that he was doing this. We found out and we showed up—

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): You didn't invite us either.

Mr Christopherson: My friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound says he wasn't invited either, but I'd say, through you, Speaker, you must be getting used to that by now, Bill.

I'll tell you what happened. We walked into the convention centre, into the main area—if you've ever been in there, there's that huge area where the meeting rooms are off to the side—and we were told we couldn't go in. It was a luncheon, as Dominic has mentioned, and it was HR representatives and labour lawyers. As I said before, real labour lawyers, not the Mulroney kind, were not present. This was the Mulroney kind. They said it was labour lawyers, but they weren't lawyers who represented unions and workers in labour matters; they were lawyers who represented corporations in employment matters and on labour matters. There were a number of labour leaders there who were going to be affected by this announcement. Even though they didn't know what was in it, they knew that generally it was going to affect, obviously, organized workers and, in a number of instances—and I'll reference those later on—the construction industry. So there were construction union leaders

there also, as well as senior representatives of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

All we wanted was to allow a delegation to be at the back of the room to listen. That's all we wanted to do. We didn't want to eat any of the food; we weren't going to throw buns; we weren't going to carry signs. All we wanted to do was listen to what the minister had to say about a law that was going to affect virtually every person in a union, for sure, and by extension possibly every worker, period, because anyone can be subject to being active in a union organizing campaign. And they said no.

Eventually, without creating too much of a fuss, although we were prepared to, the member for Hamilton East and I said, "At the very least you've got to let us in to listen to what's being said. You can't defend not allowing the two critics an opportunity to stand there and listen at the location chosen by the minister to talk about and announce a major piece of labour legislation." We were ultimately let in, which was a smart political move on the part of the staff and the minister, if he made it, but it was wrong to leave the labour leaders outside. They weren't allowed in.

So it was the chosen few who got to hear at first hand; paying delegates, I might point out—not related to the government, I'm not suggesting that kind of pay, but they were paying money to be a delegate to go to this conference, and as delegates, one of the highlights of the conference was that the Minister of Labour was going to come in and make a speech. Whether or not the organizers knew he was going to make a major policy announcement, I don't know, but I have no doubt that they highlighted the fact that the minister was coming in, because that's a good draw card, especially when you know the government is considering changes in the area that you work in.

Let me say that during the course of that speech the minister was interrupted on a number of occasions with rounds of applause, and at the end of it there was a standing ovation. Now, the labour people who represent—front-line, directly through democratic elections—the people who are affected by the bill and weren't quite as enthusiastic weren't let in the room. I think that speaks volumes about the attitude that this minister has and that this government have toward unions in particular but, I would say to you, working people overall. You like their votes; you just don't want to have to deal with them.

Then we get out in the hall, and the minister is asked, "How much of what's in here is what labour asked for?" The minister said, "Nothing." Nothing that labour asked for is in this bill. You wonder why we are upset about the fact this is being rammed through tonight in the same fashion Bill 147, the Employment Standards Act bill, was rammed through exactly the same way two hours ago—less in terms of when the voice vote was held; the formal vote will be tomorrow. You wonder why people are angry?

You've got a lot of nerve. You've got a lot of gall substituting this the workplace democracy bill. That is disgusting, but that's what you called it. Maybe at some point

people will connect the fact that what they say in here and what their laws do are two very different things. There's nothing in here that enhances, promotes or protects democracy.

I've said in earlier remarks that if you take any of these sections individually, could I stand here and say, "The sky is falling, the modern-day labour movement as we know it is gone and everything is destroyed"? No, I could not say that about a single section in here. But I can talk about the damage this bill will do with all its sections.

I believe we can make a very credible case that this is damaging to the vast majority of people, and benefits your friends who make the political contributions. I remind you that you unilaterally shortened the campaign period, which gives a distinct advantage to those who can afford advertising, and then you doubled the amount corporations can contribute to political campaigns. And you did it without the support of the two opposition parties, which is the first time in the history of this place that election laws and election financing were changed without the unanimous agreement of the three caucuses, the three parties, regardless of who was in power.

When you take all the labour legislation and add it all up and take a look at the message and the rights that have been taken away—and, yes, some of the inside baseball stuff around some of the procedures and terminology that is almost impossible to make interesting in a speech no matter what you do, because it's not glamorous, sexy kind of stuff, but it makes a huge difference. When you add cumulatively all the legislation, all the sections, all the areas, you've done a lot of damage as it looks from this side. I'm sure from your side you celebrate it. I guess those of you who go around speaking to some of your corporate friends even brag about it.

I said before that I honestly believe that down the road when people look back at this time, whether it's historians or university students who are studying labour issues—whatever the context—in every field, when enough time goes by, this going to be seen as probably, and at least arguably, one of the darkest periods of our province.

2220

Let me say to some of you—I'm assuming you don't know; I'll give you the benefit of the doubt—that people have bled for some of the fundamentals you're chipping away at in here and some of the rights you've actually unilaterally removed. They've lost their jobs, they've put their families' quality of life on the line. This is not over-the-top stuff. Anybody who's studied labour history will know there have been cracked heads, broken arms and bullet-riddled bodies. That's real. It happened. Some people have died fighting for the rights you cavalierly take away because you got a majority government and think you have the right to do whatever you please.

That's why some of us are so angry, and that's why the people who were here tonight are so angry. You're doing all that, and they don't even get a say. You will forgive people for being so insolent as to believe they

should have a say in how their democratic government runs, which is quickly becoming a quaint thing of the past. Look at this: rammed through six days before Christmas after 10 o'clock at night. Don't some of you at least feel a little sheepish, if nothing else?

Let me turn my remarks to some of the specifics. Many have been touched on by previous speakers, some not yet. But I want to read something first. One of the things you do with this business of the disclosure of wages and benefits over \$100,000—you're trying to give some credibility to your terminology. Some of you have used it here tonight; the PA to the Minister of Labour certainly has: "union bosses," like the modern-day labour movement in Ontario is run by a bunch of guys smoking cigars in a backroom somewhere deciding the fate of all their members, picking up the phone and cutting deals and meeting with people in alleyways, that whole sort of stereotypical vision you want to paint, and this is part of that.

I agree; I say to you that I have not had one person concerned about this clause, never mind getting in touch with me and saying, "Look, in terms of the big issues as we see them, if you want to hear our opinion, we think these are the big ones and here's why, and if you can draw some special attention there, that would be helpful. We need to talk about other things, but these are the main ones." Not only is that clause not considered a top priority, but nobody's even raised it with me. The only thing people are concerned about is the message behind it, like there's something to hide.

Just like you in the government backbenches and ministers, they have to pass their wages in public too. They have to pass them at membership meetings and executive meetings that are loaded with politics, just like it is here. That happens in an open democracy. They have to defend that in front of the people and get the approval of the people who pay the dues to give them those wages. That's why it is so disrespectful, at the very least, to frame this the way you are, like somehow you're going to flush out all this evil.

Kevin Conley, a compensation officer with the United Steelworkers of America, local 6500, took the time to send me something that he thought I might find useful at some point. This is that moment, Kevin, and I thank you for sending this to me. This is a quote from America's most famous lawyer—and I think most of us know the name—Clarence Darrow. Here's what he said:

"With all their faults, trade unions have done more for humanity than any other organization of men" and women "that ever existed. They have done more for decency, for honesty, for education, for the betterment of the race, for the developing of character in people than any other association of men" and women. I've added the gender balance.

That's so true, and it needs to be said over and over. All of the things we take for granted that make this a great place to live—I can't think of an exception; I'd be open to hearing something from the government benches—virtually every progressive initiative in this

province and in this country, had at the forefront of that fight the organized labour movement. A lot of the minimum standards that were in the Employment Standards Act prior to your going after it and gutting it were there because of leadership provided by the labour movement, even though there's nothing directly in there for them. This is the group you want to demonize. These are the organizations you've gone after. When you go after the labour movement in the way you have, you go after all those things that make this a great place to live.

Whether you're talking about a drug plan for seniors or pensions for seniors, or about education, environmental protection, women's rights, opportunities and rights for the disabled, virtually everything that allows the wealth and productivity powers of this province and country to be shared, at least in part, with the vast majority of people, thereby making this according to the United Nations the greatest place in the world to live, had the labour movement as part of it. You're going after them for a reason: you don't like those progressive things, not because, in most cases anyway, you're bad people, but because your political philosophy has you believing or representing the argument that that money is better put back in the hands, in most cases, of the very wealthy. Yes, they pay the majority of the taxes. They've got the majority of the money.

Rather than allowing everybody to share from productivity gains, you try to make it seem that the only way you can get an increase in your standard of living and in your wages is by a tax cut. When we reach the point of multiple billions of dollars, you're making very rich people richer, you're making corporate bottom lines richer, and you deny the average middle-class family, let alone the poor and the working poor, a chance to have the kind of health care system the productivity of this province would allow us to afford. You deny them the education system the productivity of this province will allow us to afford—the same with environmental protection, and yes, the same with labour laws.

2230

I'll give you a prime example of one of those pieces that in and of itself isn't the end of the world—although if anyone would love to make that argument, I would—but it says so much. The period where an application can be made to decertify a union now goes from 60 days at the end, the expiration of a collective agreement to 90. In and of itself, one would think 30 days isn't going to make much difference. But it's one more piece, because it's linked up with a whole lot of other things. If I had the time—which I don't because you've also denied us the chance to speak, because you changed the rules of this place—then I would explain and point out all the laws and all the things in which you're encouraging employers to try to get rid of their union by creating a climate, a legislative climate and an attitudinal climate. Think about it. How can you say it's not anti-union to lengthen the time period when an application can be made to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to get rid of the union? It's the only application of this change: the time period

when you can make an application to dump a union is extended.

On top of that, you've now got a law—a law—that requires employers to post the rules on the board about how to get rid of the union. But that's not all. Every employee has to be given a copy personally every year. That's still not all. Even if you put the notice on the board and even if you hand every employee a copy, if somebody asks the smallest of questions, the employer by law has to give them all that information again. And it happens every year.

Come on. It's insulting that you would think people are so stupid they wouldn't figure out that lengthening the time when you can apply to get rid of the union, and posting the rules and giving them to every employee about how that process works, is not meant to have unions removed from the workplace. It's insulting you would think people can't connect that. Yet that's what the Minister of Labour did, stood in his place and tried to accuse us of being fearmongers and out of touch, that only opposition people could possibly find a reason to be opposed to something as minute as this. But that's what this is all about.

This was great. Earlier today the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour—I wrote down his riding: B-G-M-S is the riding of Mr Gill from the Ministry of Labour. He said—get this—one of the reasons they had to do this was because employers have no rights. I just finished reading, a couple of hours ago, how the Supreme Court of Canada feels about the power differential in the workplace. For anyone who has ever worked, especially if you've worked for an hourly wage, the employer has all the power. The only check on that is what there is in legislation, which you watered down earlier today, and what you have in a collective agreement. Basically, rights for workers in collective agreements are rights that once rested with the employer and now, through the process of negotiation, the employees have some rights, like a grievance procedure, health and safety standards above and beyond the minimum laid out in law, vacation entitlements beyond the minimum in the Employment Standards Act—and a good thing, too, because we're still at two weeks after five years; two weeks forever, as far as your law is concerned. Yet you say you had to bring this law in to give employers some power. You gave them some power, all right.

I want to raise—again I don't have time. There's never enough time to do any of these things, but then, that's the game plan, isn't it? One of the issues in here, one of the sections, talks about the fact that no one can attempt an organizing drive for a year if there has already been an attempt that either failed or was withdrawn.

It used to be—well, it is, prior to these changes becoming law—that that applied to a specific union. I have to tell you that as much as my natural inclination is to say that that's inherently unfair, I think there's at least an argument or a debate to be had about the issue if someone has made one attempt, and that there be a reasonable period of time before they can make a second

one. But what you do here is you say any organizing drive that's withdrawn, is not concluded or fails means that nobody else can apply for a year.

I said, on the rare occasions when I have been given an opportunity to speak to this bill, that there are firms that can be hired, and we're importing them from the United States, a growth industry, and primarily what they do right now is help you bring in scabs if you're an employer who wants to defeat the union during a strike. Of course, we have scabs again in this province legally because this government changed the NDP law where we said scabs are illegal. That's how we get violence on the picket line; that's how we get unnecessary strikes; that's how workers are forced to stay out on a picket line months longer than they would have to. There's nothing fair or acceptable about scabs. You've made them legal again, so there are a lot of firms coming into Ontario, saying, "Hey, we'll show you how to deal with this. When you've got a strike and those workers go out there with their picket signs, we'll help you bring in scabs to do their jobs and let them twist out there in the cold, worrying about how they're going to put food on the table. Don't worry, that'll bring them around to seeing right."

It would be nothing for a lot of these same firms to arrange for some kind of phony employee association, to make a bid, have it fail and then that employer is guaranteed, inoculated for a year, against an organizing drive by a legitimate union. Or you could have a simple case of a union attempting to organize a workplace, only it's not the right fit; it's just the union that has gone there and talked to the workers about joining their union and they have decided that yes, they want a union—this is the scenario I'm painting—but this isn't the union they want. That's fine. They have a right to choose. The problem is, under this law, once that failed attempt has been made, nobody else can go in there for a year. That has to be worth money to some employers.

So whether it's a management decision by unscrupulous employers—and we all hope there aren't too many—or it's just the way things unfold naturally by themselves, in both these scenarios you deny those workers an opportunity to choose a union if that's their express will. I've said before I suspect there will be a challenge of this clause under the charter, and from what I'm hearing from my legal friends, it would have a really good chance of carrying.

2240

Isn't it a shame that we didn't have public hearings, which would cost a lot less than the money this government will spend defending a constitutional challenge, particularly if at the end of the day the courts rule in favour of the people against their own government. It wouldn't be the first time. On a number of occasions, this government has had to be taken to court to enforce the rights and the laws that give effect to those rights for literally hundreds of thousands of people. One that comes to mind is pay equity, women who've been underpaid systemically for decades. You had to be taken to court.

You're still not fulfilling all you should be under pay equity.

Why should the people of Ontario have to pay your legal bills, when we might've avoided all that if we'd had public hearings where we can bring in topflight lawyers, labour lawyers from both the employer's side and the employee's side? Do you know how much they cost? Nothing. They don't cost the people of Ontario a dime. They come in and give us advice that they will charge their clients, some of them, \$300, \$400 or \$500 an hour. I know when we did the WCB review on Bill 99, there were some folks who came in there who I'm sure were making upwards of \$1,000 an hour. We got it for free. I didn't agree and like their advice, but my point is we, the people, got that advice free. Wouldn't that make better legislation, to hear it here in a committee room rather than in a courtroom? We didn't get a chance to do that, on this bill or the previous bill we debated tonight, the 60-hour workweek Employment Standards Act bill.

I had a number of things I wanted to raise tonight that I was hoping to put on the record—I have said most of them in previous remarks—but I'm down to the last two minutes. One of the things that I wanted to raise is just going to take too long. Besides, it ends with me referring to a debate the Minister of Labour and I had in this place back on November 14. It ended up with me calling him a hypocrite and having to withdraw it anyway, so it's probably just as well I don't need to go through that particular story.

The fact of the matter is that there is nothing in this bill that increases wages. In fact, the reality of you releasing municipalities and school boards, under the guise of saving taxpayers' money, from having to follow current legislation where they are legally bound to use union labour, you're taking away. The argument—I heard the Minister of Labour stand there and say: "It is taxpayers' money. It is going to save them money when they build schools or build anything else through the municipality. Why would you be opposed to that? It is saving taxpayers' money."

I suppose that's fine as far as it goes, but let's understand that the money being saved for the people is coming from the people because you're denying professional tradespeople the money they're entitled to. Do you know how we deal with it in Hamilton? The minister had talked about what's fair and discriminatory and "How can you say if we brought in a law that said only non-union and not union you'd be up in arms, so why aren't you this way?" Listen. You know how we settled that particular question in Hamilton? We have a fair wage agreement. It doesn't matter whether you're a union or a non-union contractor, you've got to pay the union rate because that's seen as a fair wage. Then it is up to good management where you buy your supplies, how efficient you are at the construction site, how you use new technology. That's where you edge out your competitors, not on the backs of carpenters and sheet metal workers and bricklayers and painters and everybody else that you're hurting. Someone who's not unionized, they're going to

get less than they deserve, because they are professionals and you ought to be supporting them rather than attacking them like you are under Bill 139.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I'm pleased to speak in support of Bill 139, the Labour Relations Amendment Act. This is indeed an important piece of legislation. We have discussed this bill at some length over the past number of hours and number of days and there clearly are very strong feelings about this legislation.

I want to preface my comments, if I may, by talking about what this legislation is and is not. I want you to understand, if you would, that we on this side of the Legislature don't believe that this province is one that in any way is worse by reason of the hard work that union members put in each and every day. In other words, we appreciate what workers do for this province, and we appreciate the fact that they play a very important role in this province, a role that has been instrumental as one component in the recovery of this province. This very day, in fact, when I had an opportunity to address the budget bill, I spoke about that issue. I talked about how proud I was of the work of the men and women of this province who wake up each and every morning, who go to their respective places of employment, who take pride in their work and who go home to their families at the end of the day with their paycheque. It is because of that pride—not because of Bill Clinton, as my friend opposite is so quick to remark from time to time—it's because of that dedication, it's because of that hard work that this province has experienced the level of economic recovery that it has.

Unions have a role to play. They have had a role to play historically and they continue to have a role to play within this province. They have a voice. This legislation is not intended to change that. It is a voice; it is not the only voice.

When the citizens of this province cast their votes on election day, back in 1999, they were faced with some pretty clear choices. It will come as no surprise to those watching and to the individuals in the gallery this evening, it will come as no surprise to anyone, that this party had a philosophy that was markedly different than that of the Liberals and New Democrats. I might add that their respective policies on this issue were very much alike, very much the same, in my respectful opinion. But our government believed that there needed to be changes made to the way that labour operated within this province. Our government indicated that the wishes of the union bosses shouldn't be paramount, and in that way we distinguish ourselves from the other parties.

I want you to know that during the last election we not only indicated our general intention to bring about some change, we were quite specific about what it is that we felt needed to be done. I want to remind you, and I want to remind those watching, that we did not advocate, nor does this bill contemplate, any change to very important pieces of the patchwork of various parts of the labour law within this province. During the last election campaign, though, we did make a commitment to workplace demo-

cracy, and it's our belief—as it was back in 1999 when we campaigned—that employees needed more options, they need more choices on a wide range of issues, issues that go with belonging to a trade union.

Just so that we're very clear that what we're doing here is very much a fulfillment of an undertaking we made to the people of this province in 1999 during the election campaign, let me quote from our 1999 Blueprint plan. It's what we ran on, it was the printed document, it was the plan that we gave to the voters of Ontario so that they could understand the distinction between our party and the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party.

On page 14 of the Blueprint we said, "We've already boosted workplace democracy by giving workers secret ballot votes on certifying and decertifying unions as well as on strike votes. We'll strengthen the right of workers to decide, by secret ballot vote, whether they want to continue to be represented by a union." We said that very clearly. We also said, "We'll also require that ballot questions be clear and easily understood." On the same page of that Blueprint document, the policy we ran on in the last election, we also outlined our promise to bring in a sunshine law, for want of a better term, essentially a disclosure law so that union bosses would have an obligation to disclose their salaries, their benefits and their expenses to union members.

2250

This bill fulfills the promises that our government and our party made over the last number of years and more specifically that were made in the 1999 election. I was proud to stand up and discuss these commitments during the election campaign, and indeed these provisions from the Blueprint were discussed at some considerable length in the riding of Willowdale, and I'm very pleased to be here in the Legislature fulfilling that commitment, bringing forward these initiatives. It should come as no surprise, no shock to anyone, in spite of the loud voices that often emanate from the opposite side of the Legislature, that in fact we are moving forward with these initiatives.

Last year we pledged to strengthen the rights of individual workers to decide whether or not they want to be represented by a union, and Bill 139 keeps that pledge. It will help promote workplace stability and encourage investment in Ontario's construction industry.

Our previous amendments to the Labour Relations Act restored the balance between employers and unions in the workplace, but we believed, and we campaigned and we advocated publicly, that greater workplace democracy was necessary to restore the balance between individual workers and their unions. I want you to know that that is something the opposition parties, the Liberals and New Democrats, obviously feel is not necessary, and just as we went through the election campaign and we put our position forward and they put their position forward, we have done so this evening and we have done so on previous days within this Legislature. Just as the distinction between our party and the members opposite is crystal clear this evening, it was indeed very clear, undoubtedly, to the voters of this province in June 1999

when they went to their respective polling stations and they cast ballots and ultimately made a decision to put this government back into office for a second term, a second consecutive majority government.

Critics of Bill 139 have been quite vocal since its introduction. They say the government has changed the rules and stacked the deck against organized labour. They say these changes are targeted at vulnerable workers who might be interested in joining a union. In the limited time I have remaining, I will take a moment to look at some of the facts.

What does Bill 139 do? It does not change the threshold at which certification votes can be held. Surely if our intent was to interfere with unions' organization across this province, that would be a very simple change that we could have included within this legislation. It is not there. Bill 139 does not change the 50-plus-one majority required to certify a union in the workplace—again, it would have been very easy for us to have brought forward amendments to have made it more difficult for workers to organize on that basis—nor does Bill 139 propose different rules for different workers. Employees who desire a union will follow the same steps as before, regardless of Bill 139. It's the same procedure.

So what has really changed? What has changed is that the legislation contemplated, which I hope will be passed by this assembly, is legislation that is entrenched in democracy and accountability. It is really very much akin to that which MPPs and this Parliament operate within. Whether one looks at the transparency that comes with the sunshine clause, where one's wages are known to the public, just as MPPs' wages are known to the public, or whether one looks at the manner in which unions are put into place and the requisite need for a majority, it is all about democracy. With that in mind, I will relinquish the remaining time so that my friend may have an opportunity to speak as well.

Mr Wettlaufer: I am very pleased to speak to this bill tonight. I think one of the reasons I've been selected to speak is because I am not known as a voice of anti-unionism. I have very good friends in the labour movement at home in my riding. I direct my comments, through you, Mr Speaker, of course, to the member for Hamilton West. If he would care to, he could talk to the president of the CAW in Kitchener at Budd Automotive, Roger Lee, and he would find that I am not an anti-union, right-wing fanatic, as he sometimes calls us.

However, I would also like to say that the member for Hamilton West said earlier tonight that not one minute of public hearings is being granted on this bill. I can recall a government not that long ago which probably was the most pro-labour-union government in the history of this country. Between 1990 and 1995, the NDP government in this province passed a piece of legislation called the social contract—I believe it was 1992 or 1993—and the member conveniently forgets that they didn't have one second of public hearings.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): I didn't know that.

Mr Wettlaufer: Well, it's true. They had no public

hearings. So for the member of the NDP, the member for Hamilton West, to talk about this government not having any public hearings, he should look in the mirror.

This particular legislation that we're talking about tonight, Bill 139, I think we should take a look at what it does. It requires the disclosure of annual salaries and benefits over \$100,000 of all officers and employees of parent and local trade unions in Ontario, as well as teachers' associations, employee associations and the fire, police and college sectors, unions in the Ontario public service and other prescribed organizations and labour bodies representing the interests of trade unions or employees. The members opposite have said tonight that many of the executives of the unions already do this. That's fine. I'm glad to hear that. If many do it, then there shouldn't be a problem with this section. There are, however, unions that do not make public the salaries of their executives, and that is what this legislation will address.

Another aspect of this bill is unionized employees not always being aware of their rights. I'm not saying it's the majority of cases, it might be a minority, but they are not always aware of their rights, including the processes to follow if they want to decertify the union. That is not being anti-union, our trying to democratize the workplace by putting this into the legislation. What we will do is ensure that information will be produced to outline employees' rights and how to apply for decertification if they wish their union to be decertified. The information will include who may make an application for decertification, when the application may be made and any applicable Ontario Labour Relations Board rules regarding the decertification procedure. Trade unions already provide this information as part of a certification drive, but in the case of decertification it's not likely that the union will provide that information. So it's just a matter of ensuring that there is democratization of the workplace.

We are saying that the employees may apply to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to have their union decertified in a first-contract situation if the parties can't reach an agreement.

If one year has passed and no collective agreement has been reached, why shouldn't employees be able to apply to the OLRB to have their union decertified? Why not? It's a matter of reason, I think, and it's the same case with separate ratification and strike votes. Presently, union members have no choice but to vote for a strike—

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 22, 2000, I am required to put the question.

Mr Klees has moved third reading of Bill 139.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I have received a letter from the chief government whip. "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the

vote on third reading of Bill 139 be deferred until Wednesday, December 20, during Deferred Votes." So ordered.

2300

MINISTRY OF TRAINING,
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2000
LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT
AU MINISTÈRE DE LA FORMATION
ET DES COLLÈGES ET UNIVERSITÉS

Mrs Cunningham moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to enact the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, repeal the Degree Granting Act and change the title of and make amendments to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities Act / Projet de loi 132, Loi édictant la Loi de 2000 favorisant le choix et l'excellence au niveau post-secondaire, abrogeant la Loi sur l'attribution de grades universitaires et modifiant le titre et le texte de la Loi sur le ministère des Collèges et Universités.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): Mr Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with two of my colleagues, the member from Thornhill and the member from Simcoe.

We live in a world of rapid and continuous change. It seems a day doesn't go by without media accounts of an advance in medicine, a breakthrough in science or a technological innovation. In the latter half of the 20th century alone, we moved from an economy based on manufacturing and hard goods to one based on knowledge and information management. There has been a tremendous shift for people entering the workplace. Where before they had the ability to obtain relatively well-paying jobs based on minimal formal education and no technical skills, today that situation is reversed. They are facing increasingly sophisticated qualifications for entry-level positions in a wide range of occupations.

Their needs have changed dramatically and our post-secondary education and training system must keep pace. When our government was first elected, it faced the new challenges of the 21st century with post-secondary education and training systems designed for the workplace of the 1960s. More and more industries are reporting a shortage of the educated and skilled workers needed for them to grow and expand. More and more Ontarians will have the ability for high-paying jobs and we must provide access to the flexible and relevant programs needed for the education and skills required to fill these positions. We must be competitive.

Our employers are requiring increased levels of skill even for entry-level positions. At a time when innovation is revolutionizing the workplace at an accelerated pace, more than 65% of the workforce Ontario will have in 2015 is already working. Providing them with ongoing

access to high-quality, relevant education and training will be the challenge of the 21st century.

We have set out a plan to improve the quality, relevance and flexibility of our programs so that Ontarians have opportunities, where and when they are needed, to learn new skills and upgrade existing ones. With the proclamation of the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, we created a system based on outcomes, one that has given employers a greater role in setting standards to ensure that apprentices are prepared for the workplace. We also introduced the successful Job Connect program that this year will help some 118,000 young people, many with less than a high school diploma, enter the job market or return to school. They have an 88% success rate in this community-based program.

We are, once again, moving forward with our plan to bring our post-secondary education and training system into the 21st century with third reading of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Statute Law Amendment Act, 2000. This is an important milestone in the continuing evolution of our colleges and universities. If passed by the Legislature, Bill 132 will provide students and older workers with the full range of high-quality and relevant choices they need to compete and succeed in today's rapidly changing world.

We have already taken steps to strengthen our publicly funded system and ensure it is responsive to the needs of our students and communities. This is our first priority. Through SuperBuild, we are embarking on the single largest commitment to capital construction at our institutions in the last 30 years. With our partners, we are investing \$1.8 billion to create 73,000 new student spaces at our colleges and universities. In addition, we have already increased operating grants to \$2.4 billion this year.

We must ensure that as we move to grow the system, we do it in a way that will best serve our students, our employers and our communities.

We established the Investing in Students Task Force to look at college and university administrative operations across the system, including examining options for shared services and identifying best practices. The task force is consulting with post-secondary institutions, students, faculty and staff associations, business and local communities. As part of its mandate, the task force is soliciting proposals from institutions, associations and other organizations on ways to increase administrative effectiveness and efficiencies.

With our SuperBuild investments, the possibility of a new college charter, and the work of the Investing in Students Task Force, we believe we are putting in place a very strong foundation on which we can meet our commitment to ensuring that there is a place for every qualified and motivated student.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Statute Law Amendment Act, 2000, builds on our work to date and is one more step in fulfilling our vision for our students.

If passed by the Legislature, Bill 132 would make it possible for Ontario's colleges of applied arts and tech-

nology to grant applied degrees and would allow for the establishment of more private degree-granting institutions in Ontario. Allowing the introduction of private universities will enhance the range of programs currently offered by focusing on the ongoing educational needs of students already in the workplace. The additional competition to attract students will encourage all institutions, both public and private, to be more responsive to student needs through the development of more innovative and flexible program delivery.

In the last several months, the changes proposed in this legislation have generated an important debate on the future directions of our post-secondary system. It began with the release of our Blueprint publication that detailed the need for more relevant choices for our students. It has carried through our consultations and in the continuing debate we have held in this Legislature and at the standing committee.

I want to thank the many individuals and groups, especially students and the members of this Legislature, who have provided us with valuable feedback throughout this process. Their comments and recommendations have helped us ensure that we have the best possible legislation for the continued prosperity of our citizens and our province.

Doug Robson, president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, stated:

"With the advent of private institutions in Ontario through this legislation, prospective students will have greater choice than ever before. The option will enrich the opportunities available to students at a time when the need to compete internationally has never been greater. The major effect of competition within the university sector is a higher level of quality that may be offered to learners. The proposed legislation will therefore enable working people to access quality education at their convenience. This may be in the form of programs offered in the evenings or on-line, both of which are initiatives that private institutions may, in fact, be more inclined to offer.

2310

Dr Michael Cooke of George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology, told us:

"We want to express our strong support for this legislation, which will give colleges of applied arts and technology the authority to confer a baccalaureate degree in applied areas of study.

"The introduction of the baccalaureate degrees in applied education means more student choice and more options for them, more market-current education, more employment-ready graduates, more appropriate recognition of their credentials and smoother transition to further studies."

This legislation, which would expand the range of choices available to students and workers, has been a long time coming, but it is particularly timely now. We have indeed entered into an era where not only will students need high quality and relevant choices that prepare them to succeed in their futures, it is an era

where we anticipate more and more Ontarians will also seek to balance their working lives with ongoing education and training needed to acquire new skills or update existing ones.

We must ensure that our post-secondary education system provides high-quality and relevant programs to students when and where they are needed and that it has the flexibility to anticipate and respond to the changing realities of our world, and especially our world of work. This legislation, if passed by the Legislature, will be one more step toward meeting our plans and meeting our goals by ensuring that our system is once again focused on the real needs of our students and our learners.

Thank you for this opportunity this evening.

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I would like to speak today in support of third reading of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Statute Law Amendment Act, 2000. I welcome this opportunity to talk about the recent government initiatives we have introduced to improve the quality and relevance of our post-secondary education system in Ontario. I would like to begin by outlining why we believe this legislation is necessary to prepare our students and our institutions for the challenges that lie ahead.

The post-secondary system that we have in Ontario is the product of changing needs and demands. There was a time when the only option available to students seeking to continue their education at the post-secondary level was a university degree. That proved far too narrow an option in the mid 1960s, as the booming economy of the time created a whole new range of career opportunities for students. To meet that demand, Ontario established the community college system that provided students with a whole new avenue of choices better suited for the emerging opportunities that were being created in the workplace at that time. We are proud of what our colleges have accomplished in the first decades of their existence.

Today, we are in a similar time of change and it has been increasingly clear to us that to continue to provide high-quality and relevant programming, the time has come to once again increase the range of choices that are available to students facing the realities of the new millennium. This government is committed to ensuring that all Ontarians, whether they are currently enrolled in a college or university or are already working, have the full range of quality educational choices they need, where and when they want them, to compete and succeed in today's rapidly changing world. A wider spectrum of students with diverse needs requires an equally broad range of choices. The new Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, would provide that range of choices to our students and learners.

Today I would like to talk about how the legislation fits into the government's broader plan for post-secondary education. Similar to the 1960s, we are on the verge of a tremendous period of growth and change in post-secondary training systems. As a first step in preparing for that period of growth, we have already taken

measures to strengthen our publicly funded colleges and universities.

We have expanded access to high-demand programs through our access to opportunities program that will increase enrolment in the growth areas of science and new technology. We have also introduced new programs and incentives to strengthen our system's research capacity so that we can continue to attract the best and brightest faculty and researchers.

We are helping our students and their parents better plan for and manage the costs of their education. We are providing the highest level of student assistance ever to ensure that our system is accessible, and through the Ontario student opportunities trust fund we have established student assistance funds at each of our colleges and universities.

In addition, the minister recently announced a five-year tuition policy that will see increases capped at 2% per year. This could mean a maximum annual increase of \$34 for college students and \$77 for university undergraduate arts tuition.

This fall, more than 4,000 high-achieving students earned Ontario's first Aiming for the Top scholarships. When fully implemented, \$35 million will be invested annually in these tuition scholarships that recognize both academic excellence and financial need.

We are also making the system more transparent by measuring and reporting our progress through the use of key performance indicators. Students are using these indicators, which report on such things as graduate and employment rates, to make informed decisions about the type of program they want to pursue.

This legislation has been long overdue, but we needed time to introduce the measures necessary to revitalize our publicly funded system. To meet the expected increase in demand for student spaces, we have undertaken the single largest capital post-secondary construction program in the past 30 years. In total, through SuperBuild, we, with our partners, are investing \$1.8 billion to create 73,000 new student spaces at our colleges at universities across Ontario.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Statute Law Amendment Act, 2000, builds on our work to date and is another step in giving shape to our vision. For some time, students, parents and employers have been asking the Ontario government to allow greater flexibility in the opportunities available to students to acquire marketable skills they need to prosper in today's world. They asked for more flexibility in the way they could learn and they asked for new types of programs, ones that would provide the right balance of academic and applied skills, the types of programs already available to their counterparts in competing jurisdictions.

That's why in April we announced our intention of increasing the range of choices available to Ontario students to earn a degree. We announced that we wanted to create a level playing field with opportunities for Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology to offer applied degrees, and wanted to permit the establishment of more private degree-granting institutions in Ontario.

We wanted these new initiatives to help our post-secondary system better serve Ontario's students, and that's why we asked our stakeholders for their best advice. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I took an active part in the consultation preceding the introduction of this legislation.

One consultation I hosted on Bill 132 was in my riding of Thornhill. The stakeholders included in this consultation were two university students, one from Queen's science program and one from York's liberal arts program, a university dean, a college professor, a university administrator, an owner of a private vocational school, and business owners. These consultations were very successful, and the input we got from these consultations was taken into account in the drafting of the final bill.

2320

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join in the remainder of the debate. What I want to say is that I believe the changes that have been made with respect to this legislation work in the best interests of my riding and that of the member for Simcoe North with respect to colleges.

The degree-granting power is very significant, and the opening up of opportunities for education in this province at the post-secondary level. In my riding, Georgian College has played a significant role with respect to opening up education opportunities, not only in Simcoe county but also in the district of Muskoka, with campuses throughout.

The applied degrees at our community colleges are a major focus of this legislation, and are really an expansion of student choices. That's very important for a community like the one I come from, where there are no universities and where there aren't the options you would have in larger municipalities with respect to a university or a community college. All we have there is a community college with campuses. This is a fundamental feature of this legislation that is very important to community colleges and in particular Georgian College.

I support the legislation, and I'm very pleased to participate in the debate at this time.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I'd like to make one thing clear: if this were two bills, a bill for applied degrees for community colleges and a bill to privatize and allow private universities to come into this province, we would have two different votes on this side of the House.

We support applied degrees for community colleges. We think it's about time. We agree there are changes in the workforce that beg for this to occur. What we don't agree with, and we don't understand why the government thinks it's necessary, is the private universities, particularly the for-profit private universities this government is opening the doors to enter the province. It wasn't in their Blueprint. It wasn't even in the Common Sense Revolution. We don't know anyone who has been asking for that part of this bill, and we believe that part of it is undemocratic.

However, it is a majority government. This will pass tomorrow. I think our responsibility now, as opposition, is to keep the government on its toes with respect to the particular dangers that may occur as a result of allowing private universities to enter Ontario.

The minister talked about valuable feedback from members of the Legislature, and that she valued our feedback. However, not one Liberal or NDP motion passed in the hearings. The majority of the motions were not to change the bill to not allow private universities, although there were one or two motions like that. The majority of the motions were intended to protect the students.

Why do students need protection? If you take private colleges as an example, three of these closed in my riding alone. A lot of students are sometimes left in the middle of their studies when their institution closes. We believe they need protection, because this may very well happen in the private universities. The minister is already anticipating this, and there is a situation where there will be a bond for these students. We thought the students needed more assurance: transfer of credits to public universities; not only tuition being paid back but also the expense of books and living expenses; and something you can't pay back, and that's two or three years of their lives if they cannot transfer these credits to public universities.

There are precedents in other parts of the country where a more smooth transition of credits and years from college to university or from university to university is allowed. Alberta is an excellent example of this, and one of our own public universities in the north, Nipissing, is also a good example of this. In fact, their community college and their university are in one building and they have an excellent, seamless education.

The member from Thornhill said we needed new choices, and the Liberal Party agrees. Our leader has said we do not support the status quo. We understand that changes are occurring in our society and we need to keep up with those changes. I guess where we differ is how these changes come about. The university presidents themselves have said to us, "We're not afraid of private universities as long as we are properly funded so we can compete fairly."

I think we have to emphasize that point here. Yes, there was a major investment with SuperBuild. But there wasn't a major investment in operational grants, and without operational grants you can't have the professors and students to fill those new buildings. The minister herself acknowledges there are faults in these formulas as to what part of the new operating fund universities and colleges get, but as yet we haven't seen any changes to these formulas. I do hope they occur in good time, so the universities can plan for their next school year.

We applaud the government on their science and technology scholarships. My husband is a science and technology professor, and I know the importance of those. I hear it frequently from him and from his students. However, we can't forget the arts. I'm extremely con-

cerned that by the selective funding of certain universities and colleges or programs through SuperBuild and through operating grants, the arts aren't getting funded properly. I hope the government will look at this again. I believe most of us here are arts graduates, and the importance of the arts can't be underestimated.

The other caution—I've given this to the government before—is on OSAP. This government has said over and over again that no public monies will be given to private institutions except for OSAP, which of course is public money. The administration is public, and the default on those loans is taxpayers' money when that occurs. As we know, private colleges in Ontario have the highest default rate in comparison to public colleges—over 30%—so there is public money there.

But there's more than that. On November 29, in Hansard, there was a contradiction. At first it was stated in the public hearings "that there will be no cost to the taxpayer and that the institutions will not receive any public money." I'm quoting the parliamentary assistant. A few minutes later, the same parliamentary assistant, in response to a question about public money, in particular research money, said, "We can't guarantee that any ministry would not support research funding for any institution that would find that there's a program or something that they would be excelling in. It's each individual ministry that would determine that."

The parliamentary assistant was clear: "The private institutions will receive no capital grants and no operating grants." However, she said, "Grants are given by different ministries," and, "I can't speak for all of the ministries on whether or not that would be something that they would consider."

We heard today from the Minister of Science and Technology about all the research grants that were awarded in London today. We have a fear that that money will start going to these private universities. If that's the case, say so, so the public knows what we're voting for tomorrow. To say there isn't any public money is a contradiction, actually in Hansard on the same day.

I'd like to briefly put some of the other amendments we had into the record here as well. One was, "That the minister should not give a consent unless he or she is satisfied that the person or the private institution seeking the consent will have physical facilities containing the equipment and learning resources appropriate to the educational programs to be offered and a sufficient number of full-time teaching staff with appropriate educational qualifications to teach the programs." We were reassured by the parliamentary assistant that the quality assurance board would look at that, and we will be watching. If I take you back to the Credit Valley school in Mississauga, once the investigation began, apparently that was only a two- to three-room gimmick that allegedly defrauded the taxpayers of \$18 million. That is why we thought it was an important motion.

Another one of our amendments that did not pass—none of them passed—was that if, for whatever reason, a private institution closed, they should not be able to get a

charter again in Ontario. That was, I believe, the least that could have passed. If any institutions put students through that—closing in the middle of their university career—they do not deserve to be let back in into the country and the province.

2330

Another amendment was, "That the government of Ontario shall not provide funding to a person who obtains a consent under section 3, other than financial assistance to students, if the consent relates to a private university." I touched on that earlier, and that is, we can understand why the government would want to give OSAP to students going to private institutions. However, what we are against is other public monies, for example research money and operational grants and capital costs.

Although at present the federal minister of trade is saying NAFTA will not be an issue, we believe that it may be an issue and that this can be challenged in court under NAFTA, and we may very well, regardless of who's in government in the future, be forced to give grants to private institutions. It's a myth to think that the private institutions in the United States do not accept public money. MIT, for example, has 70% of its research funding coming from public sources. It's actually called a publicly supported university now, even though it is a private, not-for-profit university.

In my very first speech here, my maiden speech—I guess that's what they called it—back in September or October of 1999, I talked about one of my constituents who had a \$60,000 student loan. This government in the past few years has increased tuition to the point where this highest level of assistance, which the member from Thornhill bragged about, is actually necessary because the tuition is very high. Yes, they did cap it to 2% for the next few years, and we're thankful for that and so are the students, but it's already risen 60% in this mandate alone.

A lot of students, Carissa in my riding for example, owe \$60,000 at this time. That 2% cap isn't going to help her. She can't qualify for loan forgiveness because she did need extra money to support a dependent, and this educated, brave young woman is having a terrible time. Earlier in the week we heard from the third party of other cases where students from lower-income families cannot access education.

I think our leader said it best last month when he said, "You starve a system and then you tell the public that, hey, it's not working, now we need to go private." I hate to think that that is what is happening here, but that seems to be the case. As an opposition, the best we can do now is damage control and ensure that these private universities don't destroy the future of our students by closing in the middle of their degrees. We will be watching very carefully.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): This is a remarkably sad night in the Ontario Legislature. We have spent a total of five hours debating on third reading three incredibly important bills, all of which will set back our province in a very negative way.

The Employment Standards Amendment Act, where the government will bring forward 60-hour workweeks,

brings us back to the 19th century in terms of the working conditions. Bill 139, the Labour Relations Amendment Act, is nothing less than a direct attack on the labour movement in this province. Now we have Bill 132, which in essence formally brings two-tiered education into the post-secondary sector of our education system in this province. It's very sad.

I'm glad to have a few moments to at least express my very strong concerns about this legislation. I want to be able to present to the minister, who I am glad is here in the House, 900 letters that have been sent to me and delivered to me personally by the Lakehead University Student Union president, Jeremy Salter. I met with him a week or so ago and he was very, very keen to have us present these to the minister.

Certainly Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals believe in and we support increased investment in our public universities. We do not support passing the buck to private operators, whose main motive obviously is money. The university students at Lakehead University are very concerned about what impact this will have, particularly on our northern universities. They did want me to pass this on directly to the minister. I wish I had time to read the letters; I don't. I want to give time to my colleague from Windsor West. But I do want to pass them on to the minister, 900 letters very strongly put. Their concerns are legitimate. I hope you will take them seriously, Minister, and I hope you will respond to them formally.

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): This is a very important bill, because I come from a university city and the University of Windsor has been cash-starved for years. They have undergone a tremendous amount of change in how they do business in Windsor. It's true.

While the members opposite are going to deny there's even a problem, I want to recount a story of a couple of weeks ago at a local hospital in Windsor. I sat around the boardroom table at Hotel Dieu Hospital and met with third-year nursing students. These nursing students in third year were doing part of their practical. I asked every one of those nurses around the table their average debt as a third-year student. They're not done with their degree yet and the average loan they were paying was in the neighbourhood of \$30,000. Loans of \$30,000 are the average amount the nurses around that table speaking to me had in terms of debt to get through school.

My leader, Dalton McGuinty, spoke in the House some time ago and talked about how, thanks to the deregulation of the system and this government, the average mean income of families who have a student in medical school has gone up by thousands of dollars just in the last couple of years. What that tells us is that, for that field of medical students, of which we need more and not enough spaces have been allotted for what our communities need in terms of doctors coming out of the system, it's becoming so that only rich kids' families are going to be able to send their kids to medical school. Thanks to the Conservative government, we are moving into an elitist type of world where the rich families get to send their

kids to school and everybody else is scrambling even to get into the system.

When I look at what it was like when I was a university student, you could afford to have a part-time job, could afford to have some level of support from your family, and be able to pay your bills and walk out with some modest level of debt, so that you could get out in the working world and not make a lot of money at first and it would still be OK. The others across the way want to talk about, "The sky is falling." The sky's already fallen for an awful lot of students who have made choices not to go on in school because they don't want to increase debt even more. They've already made choices to go to a program maybe at a college as opposed to a university because of the cost. We've already seen the effect on people in terms of what choices they've made. The government's response to that is the introduction of private universities whose only interest, for those that will be on as a private university, is return on investment. That's their business.

You've pulled the kind of operating dollars required for universities like mine, the University of Windsor, to appropriately fund our system, and the only answer you have is to create an environment for private universities to flourish. I ask you, why? The minister on her feet, in answers to questions, would not say that she would not be giving government money to these private institutions. As my colleague the critic from Hamilton Mountain suggests, why would you take public taxpayers' money and hand it over to private institutions in any manner, including support of students with OSAP loans for them to attend a private university? When you suck out the critical mass that we need in our university systems that currently exist, all you do is ruin what you currently have in a public system. If that was the intent of the government, they should have said that's what they intended to do.

We don't know what the reason is to have introduced private universities, only that it is not an answer for the majority of students who attend our public schools. Our public universities are key. Everybody talks about what corporate Canada wants. They want well-educated workforces and the only way we're going to do that is to encourage more and more to graduate from universities and to provide great programs. To the credit of our universities, they are responding and are being innovative. They're using technology as much as they can. They've gone to the corporate sector for donors. They've been forced to under the so-called SuperBuild. I guess the biggest joke on them is the SuperBuild fund, as if it were some novel way of bringing capital dollars into the university system.

These universities raise millions of dollars a year already. Now all they have to do is switch the title and say this is for SuperBuild in terms of getting part of the money that used to be available on a much more free-flowing basis through capital grants to the university ministry. Now you just make them fit your new mould of SuperBuild. It is not new money coming in for capital

projects at a university. Even when they can build new buildings, there's no discussion of operating monies that are going to be allowed for them to operate the brand new buildings. Nobody wants to talk about operating dollars. I go back to those nursing students I met with an average debt of \$30,000, and they were in their third year.

2340

Most of the people who work in my community as nurses would be flabbergasted to hear the expense of coming through the program today. In light of the shortage we have facing us today, there is nothing that is going to encourage them to come into the nursing program, looking at a \$30,000 average debt after your third year, knowing you have another year to go. The Minister of Health is going to have a tremendous problem dealing with this crisis and the Minister of Colleges and Universities has been of no help whatsoever.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Interjection.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): It's probably more than even my mother can stomach.

It's interesting that we would deal with this tonight, because earlier we had a former employee of caucus services—I didn't get her permission to use her name, but I will use her circumstance. Her first name's Kim and she came back to drop by and say hi for the Christmas season. She has just finished university, just got her degree, landed an excellent job. She's a very intelligent, articulate individual. I suspect she'll do very well.

I asked her, because I knew this was coming up, not even if there was a debt load but, "What is your debt load?" and it was about \$24,000. Apparently that's pretty close to what the average is. An average also means that you've got some folks who have a lot less debt, and that probably means, not in every case, that there's enough money and income in the family so that they didn't have to go into debt. I think that's a reasonable observation. But that average also means there are students who are probably carrying \$30,000, \$35,000, \$40,000. We hear some horror stories of some students graduating out of university with \$50,000 in debt.

We've made the case. I believe tuition's gone up over 60% just in your time alone. Our argument has always been that you're eventually going to price higher education, one of the key fundamentals that makes this a great place to live—you're changing it and you're not changing it for the better. You've claimed that—it's your favourite phrase; you do it all the time—"It's about choice. We just want to make sure people have more choices, and if they prefer to go to a public university, they can. If they want to go to a private university, they can do that. What's your problem, opposition members?"

The problem of course is always when you scratch the surface and take a look at what's going on. First of all, dealing with tuitions, I'm not aware of any examples of the private universities that are being touted by this government as good examples to bring into Ontario,

where the tuition fee is less than anything we have here in Ontario. It's always higher. We've said to you that at the end of the day you're going to drive up tuitions to the point where the average working, middle-class, ordinary family will not be able to afford to send their children to university, no matter how talented they are.

Isn't that the whole point, access to universal education and to universal health care, that as a citizen one of your birthrights in this very profitable, wealthy society we call Ontario is that you have access to health care regardless of how much money your family makes, and the same with your education? All that matters is whether you have a health care need and whether, if you have a son or daughter who needs an operation, it won't be decided that they have that operation or not by how much money mom and dad have in the bank or how lucky they are in terms of the jobs they have. And it's supposed to be the same way with education, that our best and our brightest and those who are willing to take those talents and add hard work to them would have an opportunity to be the best they can, and not just in an Ontario context, but we have above-average levels of excellence at the international level. How many of those students, because mom and dad don't make enough money, will never be given the opportunity to grow, to ultimately succeed and be the best they can be? How many will settle for less? How many students are saying, "No, I can't afford it, mom and dad can't afford it, so I won't be going to university"?

It's interesting, because on September 12 of this year, in the *Ottawa Citizen*, it was reported that Statistics Canada, in their latest education quarterly review, had this to say:

"One of our most significant findings is that there has been a widening gap in university participation by family socio-economic status. Further, our findings suggest that university participation rates have not increased as fast for young people from low family socio-economic status backgrounds."

That means they weren't rich. That's who is going to be going to school more and more. Ability alone will not determine whether you can go to a university.

We don't get a lot of time here, do we?

The other big thing is this notion that it won't cost anything. "Bring them in. It gives people choice. It won't cost the taxpayers any money. It's all privately funded. There you are, you have a choice, whatever works for you. Aren't we wonderful?" Yet the reality is that the model you're using is imported from the United States. It's their right as a sovereign nation to make their own decisions, but we have the same right, and under our Constitution education is the responsibility of the provincial government. We have a choice too. We have a right to make a choice whether we want that system or we want to continue the system that has served us so well.

The reason I raise the United States as an example is because about 30% of their private universities' operating income is publicly funded. Virtually every one of them, at the end of the day, gets public funding.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Well, if you want to respond and have a debate, you should give more time on the floor of the Legislature for third reading, rather than one hour, I say to the parliamentary assistant, who has suddenly gotten very talkative. Isn't that interesting? Funny how you've gotten more talkative as the night has gone on. Why is that?

Mr David Young (Willowdale): You didn't answer my question.

Mr Christopherson: Oh, I didn't realize this was question period and I was suddenly the minister. If you want to make it that way, I'm game.

Mr Young: It's a flashback.

Mr Christopherson: A flashback—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Christopherson: First of all, OSAP is going to be available to students who go to those universities, and that's government-funded. There are going to be, as I understand it, tax incentives available to corporations that want to make contributions, as there are now in the public, but that money will be diverted from the public into the private. It means that because we as a society gave a tax credit to the corporation that makes that expenditure—they give \$150,000; it's good that they do but it's not all out of the goodness of their heart; there is an economic benefit to it—that money will not go to a public university. That's money we've lost, and the fact that it has gone to a private institution means that we have subsidized, in part, the operation of the university.

2350

Why does that matter? I take us back again to the whole tuition issue. It was interesting to read from the *Hansard*, I believe Wednesday, November 29, when the chairman and the founder of Argosy Education Group came before the committee. He said, "Briefly, Argosy Education Group was established in 1975 and is now a 25-year-old institution that operates 17 different schools and colleges across the United States." That's who they are.

He said, in part, during his presentation to the committee: "With respect to offering degrees in information technology"—this is the chair of the private university, the corporation, speaking—"note that private schools, such as Argosy, are able to invest in equipment and upgrades to technology at a more rapid pace than is available to the public sector. We, as a publicly traded company on the NASDAQ, have access to adequate funding and capital to buy the equipment that's necessary to train students to be prepared for jobs that are available today."

I thought that's what our public university was there for. And results are that it was working quite well. In fact, Ontario universities used to be the top funded in all of Canada; now we're at the bottom. And one of the reasons this private university is saying we should support them is that they can invest more money in post-secondary education than public institutions? Rather—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: We need to have order. I'm having difficulty hearing the member for Hamilton West. I know it's getting late but let's try to just hold it together for a few more minutes.

Mr Christopherson: Who'd have believed it? At five to 12 we're not having quality debate. Boy, what a surprise. If the cameras could zoom over here to the loosened ties and wobbly eyes, they'd understand that this is not the smartest thing in the world. There's a reason they got rid of night sessions in the past, you know, and it had nothing to do with laziness. However, you don't listen to anybody anyway.

I was pointing out that rather than seeing this as a condemnation of the government and your lack of funding for public universities, you're trying to turn that and use it as an excuse for letting private universities come in, because they make the argument that they can invest more money—

Hon Mrs Cunningham: No, no, no.

Mr Christopherson: The minister says, "No, no, no," but all I'm pointing out is that that was the submission they made. That's the submission and that's what they were bragging about. I'm saying that rather than using that as any kind of a reason to say this is why we ought to allow private universities, I think that you ought to take that as a condemnation of the cuts you've made to universities, like mine in Hamilton, McMaster University, where the place is literally falling apart.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Come on.

Mr Christopherson: Now, wait a minute. I grant you, I've been there when you've made announcements. I'm not saying you haven't invested a dime, but I am saying that you have cut and that the results of those cuts are that there are parts of McMaster University that are literally falling apart because they don't have the money to repair them. That's a reality, and the fact that that exists ought not in any way to suggest that that should give you reason to allow and want private universities to come in because they make these arguments. What it ought to say to you, Minister, is that you haven't done a good enough job, that you needed to fight to make sure that universities got the funding they need. But you know what? I won't hang that on you personally, Minister, because I happen to know that at the end of the day the decisions are made by Management Board. They tell you how much you've got to cut and you've got to go find it. The reason it has to be cut is because you've got to pay for all your tax cuts, the giveaways to the very wealthy, to the very wealthy corporations. At the end of the day, it does come back to all that.

The economics of this are very simple. You've taken away from things that have made this the greatest place in the world to live. You've sucked that money out, and you've given it to the friends who are funding your campaign platforms and your election campaigns and your party. That's why you changed the election laws. I pointed that out earlier.

This gentleman went on to say, "I would urge you that this is not a question of whether a school is for-profit or

not-for-profit or whether it is public or private, but the quality and integrity of the academic programs ought to stand and fall on their own merits. The distinction as to whether a corporation is a net taxpayer or a net tax consumer should not be a criterion on which to judge whether that institution ought to be capable of awarding academic degrees."

Take that same quote and replace "capable of awarding academic degrees" with "providing fire prevention and protection," and the argument is that they ought to privatize fire services. It's the same argument, the one that's laid out here. You set the standards and then you stand back and whoever can bid, and usually the way they can bid is by who can pay their employees—in this case, profs and support staff—the least and jack up tuition fees the most, whoever can pay those folks the least and charge the highest tuition, is the best corporate player, therefore they win.

But we don't believe in that here. We don't believe in it in our hospitals. We don't believe in it in our fire service. We don't believe in it in our police service. We don't believe in it in our ambulance service—at least we shouldn't; more are private than should be. In Hamilton they had the good sense to take it over and operate it municipally, but that's not the case everywhere.

All you've done is identify these public entities, and you see two things: (1) an opportunity to make some friends happy and (2) a way you don't have to spend money so that your bottom line looks good. It doesn't seem to matter whether or not it's better for the vast majority of people and families and students. That doesn't seem to come into the equation.

The choice is already out there. You say that's the reason for this. If somebody's got enough money and can go to Ivy League universities, they're going to do it anyway. Lord knows, with the amount of tax benefits you've given those folks, they can easily afford it on those alone. If they want to go to university somewhere else, that's fine. Nobody's saying they can't.

In this case, because it's about public business, we are far more concerned with what and how things impact on the vast majority of people, particularly those who live from paycheck to paycheck, which is the vast majority. Most people do live from paycheck to paycheck. If that paycheck is interrupted, their ability to provide for their families is interrupted also. That's the world we are concerned about, and that's the world you're not serving, Minister.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: No matter how much you try to heckle down the argument, it still remains. This is not going to benefit anyone except your bottom line. It's not going to benefit students who obviously, as a result of StatsCan analysis, are no longer able to afford tuition fees. The introduction of private universities is going to jack up tuition fees even more, even if it's just because public universities have no other way of raising the kind of money they need to compete with the private sector because you pulled back on your commitments.

I agree with my colleague who earlier said this is a really sad day in this Legislature. Given what's happened here and what's been rammed through and the loss of democracy, Bill 132 is just another example of bad public policy.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 31, 2000, I am now required to put the question.

Mrs Cunningham has moved third reading of Bill 132. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), the chief government whip has requested that the vote on third reading of Bill 132 be deferred until Wednesday, December 20, during Deferred Votes. So ordered.

It being past 12 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until later today at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 0001.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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**Official Report
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Wednesday 20 December 2000

Mercredi 20 décembre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 décembre 2000

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

STATUT LINGUISTIQUE DE VANIER

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier) : Hier soir, j'ai participé à la toute dernière réunion du conseil de ville de Vanier.

The Vanier city council unanimously and enthusiastically adopted the following resolution, which I will summarize for the purpose of this statement:

Attendu que la région d'Ottawa-Carleton est une région désignée en vertu de la Loi sur les langues officielles du Canada et en vertu de la Loi sur les services en français de l'Ontario ; et

Attendu que la région d'Ottawa-Carleton compte un très grand nombre de francophones et francophiles qui contribuent largement à son épanouissement et à son développement ; et

Attendu que l'usage du français et de l'anglais dans l'exécution des programmes et des services municipaux devra être une pratique courante de l'administration, reflétant ainsi les valeurs linguistiques de la nouvelle ville d'Ottawa,

Il est alors résolu que la ville de Vanier demande au conseil municipal de la nouvelle ville d'Ottawa de déclarer celle-ci officiellement bilingue afin de faire en sorte que la nouvelle ville d'Ottawa soit représentative d'un Canada où les deux peuples fondateurs sont traités de façon juste et équitable.

Il est de plus résolu qu'une copie de cette résolution soit envoyée à l'honorable Mike Harris, le premier ministre de l'Ontario, et à l'honorable John Baird, le ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones.

La résolution a également été envoyée à d'autres politiciens et politiciennes de la région d'Ottawa, ainsi qu'à des représentants et représentantes d'organisations francophones, les encourageant à mettre davantage de pression auprès du premier ministre et de son ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones.

Il est malheureux de constater qu'en décembre dernier, le premier ministre a manqué une chance en or de donner suite à la résolution numéro 4 du rapport Shortliffe. Il aurait ainsi démontré aux francophones qu'il croyait en nous et notre cause.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Yesterday I introduced a resolution urging this House to introduce legislation that would provide tax credits equivalent to the cost of tuition to people who send their children to private school, including religious schools. This is a fair thing to do. A recent Gallup Canada survey indicated that 80% of people in Ontario favour the provincial government providing at least some support for non-public or other religious schools.

As you are aware, a United Nations human rights committee recently ruled that this province is violating human rights by funding Roman Catholic schools but not funding the schools of other religious groups. The same survey showed that 70% of the people of this province think Ontario should respond by extending funding to other groups.

It is not a question of educational equality, that somehow the public school system is not good enough. It's simply that public schools are like everything else in society: they cannot be everything to everyone. Parents have long realized this. Independent schools flourish because of this.

This resolution puts the fairness back into the system. We are not asking this government to fund these schools. No, we are asking for a tax credit equivalent to tuition, a tax credit that we give so easily to other organizations.

Parents have the primary responsibility for directing the education of their children. Government protects the public interest by establishing educational standards. Democracy blooms through educational diversity and choice. It is in the best interests of society for government to provide fair funding for all students receiving an education that meets the standards for realizing the public good.

I have a school here today, Timothy Christian, and they will be in here later.

QUARRYING

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): This government has presented Ontario's Living Legacy as a document that will protect wilderness areas throughout the province. In my riding of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, however, an aggregate permit application has been made for a quarry within a conservation reserve.

Mellon Lake residents were flabbergasted to learn that the Living Legacy document has been written in such a

way as to grandfather quarrying permits, including this one near an environmentally sensitive region. Residents have very serious concerns, as this site is close to the home of rare plants and animals such as the prairie warbler, the five-lined skink and the little prickly pear cactus, the most northern cactus in North America.

The Ontario Living Legacy, a document the government presents as the protector of our great Ontario wilderness, may not offer the protection that the government indicates. The residents of Mellon Lake have asked for an environmental assessment and a review to ensure that quarrying activity would not endanger this sensitive region. The ministry has been reviewing this request since July, and still no decision has been made.

The Mellon Lake area holds some of Ontario's most unique environmental treasures. If the Living Legacy document is worth the paper it is written on, I urge the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of the Environment to work together, grant an environmental assessment and protect Ontario's wilderness.

MALACHY McKENNA

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):

Today I wish to talk about a young Irish man who is entertaining his homeland with stories from a tobacco bunkhouse—a structure that can be found all over my riding in tobacco country.

Malachy McKenna is an Irish playwright who spent years toiling in the tobacco fields of Norfolk, through the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board's student exchange program. It was in the fields and in the bunkhouse at the farm of Marius and Maryanne Vanbesien that Mr McKenna learned about himself, learned about people from different cultures and the fact people truly are the same the world over. These are the things local young people and exchange students learn during the summer months throughout Ontario's tobacco belt.

Aside from the importance of hard work, which sees one up at the crack of dawn, in an interview with our daily, the Simcoe Reformer, Mr McKenna said it was impossible to put a price on the value of the experience he had as a student working the Ontario tobacco harvest. I think a person like Stompin' Tom Connors would say the same thing.

I'm looking forward to McKenna's play and reminiscing about my years as a tobacco primer in the tobacco fields. I commend the Vanbesien family for providing Mr McKenna, and through him providing people in Ireland, the stories of his wonderful learning experience that is now gaining international attention.

1340

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Later this afternoon this Legislature is going to be passing some of the most regressive anti-working-people legislation in the history of Ontario. Thanks to Mike Harris, Ontarians will

now be forced to work 60 hours a week. Thanks to Mike Harris, Ontarians will work more hours for less overtime.

This piece of legislation attacks the most vulnerable workers in our province—students, young people, new Canadians—individuals who are often not represented by labour unions. This legislation is simply a gift, a Christmas gift, to big business, to those friends of Mike Harris who purchase tickets to go to fundraising dinners and who lobby this government. Instead of protecting vulnerable workers, Mike Harris today, with this legislation, is going to expose five million Ontarians to difficulties in the workplace, to harassment, to working more hours for less money, making it harder to organize, making it easier to decertify.

This is a disgraceful, disgraceful day in the history of Ontario. Many of the gains that have been made in the last 50 years are going to be wiped out with this legislation that Mike Harris is bringing in today. The last time we had a 60-hour workweek in Ontario was in 1940. Instead of moving forward, this government has turned the clock back 60 years. You should be ashamed of yourselves. It's a disgraceful performance by a government that is catering to big business, abandoning the most vulnerable workers in Ontario. It's a sad day for labour, a sad day for Ontario, but most of all a sad day for working people in this province.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr David Young (Willowdale): On the evening of March 19, 1997, a constituent of mine was attacked and savagely beaten with a baseball bat as he slept in his home. The majority of the blows were to his head and in particular his face. The culprit then stole money and took my constituent's truck as he fled.

My constituent spent five days in intensive care, underwent five surgical procedures and spent months in a rehabilitation facility where he learned once again how to eat, how to drink, how to walk, how to adjust to life with sight in only one eye.

The criminal trial took three years to complete, three years which were ultimately counted against the imposed sentence as time served. Three different judges presided over this matter. The case was remanded on 21 occasions, often because the correct paperwork was not always available.

My constituent was not allowed to make a victim's impact statement because the lawyer for the culprit successfully argued that such a statement would just be far too personal.

It is said that justice delayed is justice denied. Justice was indeed eventually done in this case, but no victim, nor their family, deserves to be put through this kind of protracted suffering by our judicial system. No victim, nor their family, should be prevented from sharing with the court the details of what happened to them and how it has impacted upon their lives.

The government of Ontario has made great strides in advancing victims' rights. But there remains more to do.

I urge the government of Ontario and the government of Canada to sit down, put politics aside and work together to make sure that our system of justice better serves victims and their families.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): We all know that Santa is from the north. Last night, when I was on House duty, he passed by the Legislature, dropped in and asked me if I would give out some presents for him because he was on his way back in order to make sure that everything's ready for Christmas Eve.

The first present that Santa and people from the North want me to deliver is to the Minister of Citizenship and Culture. Because this is our millennium year, we want her to remember this year, so Santa would like her to have an autographed copy of this book. I'm going to ask my elf Dwight to bring it over to the minister.

For the Minister of Transportation, who says the roads in Ontario are so good, we want him to have some salt in case he travels the roads of northern Ontario. We know he will need this. I'm going to ask my elf Marie to deliver this to the minister.

In the spirit of co-operation that's beginning to exist in this House, I'm going to present the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing with a blank cheque made out to the city of greater Sudbury. All he has to do is fill in the amount and sign it. I'm going to ask Dwight to make sure he brings that across and ask the minister to return the cheque immediately.

You know, there is a good relationship developing between me and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Because I want to ensure that he comes to Sudbury often, I'm providing him with what's called the one perfect gift. It's a map of northern Ontario so he won't get lost along the way. I'm going to ask elf Marie to bring it over.

I have a framed original for the Minister of Health. It's a framed original of the petition to the Ontario Legislature to end health care apartheid. Santa wants the Minister of Health to look at this framed original over the holidays, and hopefully it will affect any decisions she makes. Elf Dwight?

We have a gift for the Premier. It's a golf T-shirt, because we know he'll probably be doing some golfing over the holidays. This golf T-shirt says, "Cancer Tumours Don't Know the Meaning of Re-referral: Northern Cancer Patients Want Equality." I'm going to ask elf Marie to bring this over.

Finally, Speaker, Santa is very concerned about your voice and your having to shout over members in the Legislature, so Santa's providing you with the official Speaker whistle. I would ask elf John, who never heckles, to present it to you.

Finally, we want to wish everyone a very happy, safe, joyful Christmas, from the people of northern Ontario to every member in the House.

SALVATION ARMY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Recently the Salvation Army approached me to assist them in finding warehouse space for their Christmas toy drive distribution centre. The Salvation Army, as many of you in this House know, plays an important role in my community in ensuring that needy children and families can share in the magic of Christmas.

I am proud to inform this House that with the help of a generous local business, 23,000 square feet of warehouse space was found and located in Scarborough.

The Salvation Army toy drive expects to assist 20,000 needy children this year. The residents of Scarborough provide 70% of the volunteers at the toy depot and donated approximately 30% of the 100,000 toys collected this year.

Minister Margaret Marland has established the \$30-million early years challenge fund to assist Ontario's most vulnerable and impressionable children. Mike Harris offered to assist in ensuring that every child in Ontario receives a toy at Christmas. I ask the members of this House and the people of Ontario to help them help Ontario's needy children by contributing to the Salvation Army's toy drive. The army desperately needs toys for girls aged three to 10. They suggest Barbie dolls, stuffed toys, craft kits, children's videos, cassette players and board games.

Lieutenant Colonel Hugh Tilley of the Salvation Army is in the members' gallery today. Please join me in showing our collective appreciation for the good work the army performs all year, and especially for needy children and their families during this season. Merry Christmas to all.

STATUS OF BILL 172

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Maybe I'll read this before the last statement.

I beg to inform the House that, due to a drafting error, Bill 172 standing in the name of the member for London West, Mr Wood, was introduced on December 18 with French and English versions that do not accord with each other.

Therefore, pursuant to subsection 3(2) of the French Language Services Act and standing order 33(d), the bill will be removed from the Orders and Notices paper.

I apologize for the inconvenience of that.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm glad to see the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is here, because we have a little message for him this Christmas season. We say, "Ho, ho, ho, where's the dough for Sudbury, Tony?" It's time for Minister Clement to show a little Christmas spirit and produce a \$24-million cheque for the new city of Sudbury so we can pay for the tran-

sition costs that have been forced upon us by this government through its forced restructuring of our region.

Minister, you would know that it has now been one full year since your government passed Bill 25, which forced restructuring on our community, and in all of that time you have not committed to pay the restructuring costs that come from this scheme. One whole year and you have yet to publicly announce whether or not you are going to pick up the entire tab, never mind producing the cold, hard cash in order to do so.

Minister, it's now been not one, but two Christmases since you let this matter pass. You are making Scrooge look good on this one. We say to you that it's time to put your money where your mouth is during this Christmas-time and produce the cash, especially now, because the transition costs have doubled from \$12 million to \$24 million. There's no reason in the world why those property taxpayers in the city of greater Sudbury should have to pick this up.

This is your bill; you forced it upon us. Produce the \$24 million to pay the transition costs in Sudbury.

1350

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the 16th report of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move this adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendments, Bill Pr34, An Act respecting the University of St Jerome's College.

Your committee further recommends that the fees and the actual cost of printing at all stages be remitted on Bill Pr34, An Act respecting the University of St Jerome's College.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr Murdoch moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 178, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): It is my pleasure today to introduce a second amendment to the Ontario Legislative Assembly Act.

I believe that it is an amendment that makes common sense out of a ticklish issue that we faced recently, the salaries of the MPPs. If passed, this act will see Ontario's Integrity Commissioner, a man appointed after consultations with all political parties, to be the one who determines how much members of this House will be paid.

I believe that a truly impartial figure is the only one who should be setting the pay schedules of politicians. I believed this when I was the reeve of Sydenham township, I believed this when I was warden of Grey county and I believe it now.

That's why the Ontario Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, 2000, if passed, also contains a provision that all municipalities in Ontario can opt into using the Integrity Commissioner's services in this manner: an impartial look at a thorny issue.

Also, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to introduce my resolution yesterday, that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should introduce legislation that would provide tax credits equivalent to the cost of tuition to people who send their children to private schools, including religious schools.

GREATER JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR UNE OBLIGATION ACCURUE DE RENDRE COMPTE EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES NOMINATIONS À LA MAGISTRATURE

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 179, An Act to provide for greater accountability in judicial appointments / Projet de loi 179, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte en ce qui concerne les nominations à la magistrature.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): A couple of days ago I introduced Bill 172, An Act to provide for greater accountability in judicial appointments. Yesterday the office of the legislative counsel was kind enough to draw to my attention and to that of the table of this House that by mistake the French version of the bill was not an accurate translation of the English version. You quite properly removed Bill 172 from the order paper today.

The office of the legislative counsel has apologized for this error and advises that they have developed a procedure to ensure that such an error will not happen again.

I am, therefore, reintroducing this bill in a form in which French and English versions conform.

AUDIT AMENDMENT ACT, 2000 LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA VÉRIFICATION DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Mr Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 180, An Act to amend the Audit Act to insure greater accountability of hospitals, universities and colleges, municipalities and other organizations which receive grants or other transfer payments from the government or agencies of the Crown / *Projet de loi 180, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la vérification des comptes publics afin d'assurer une responsabilité accrue de la part des hôpitaux, des universités et collèges, des municipalités et d'autres organisations qui reçoivent des subventions ou d'autres paiements de transfert du gouvernement ou d'organismes de la Couronne.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): The purpose of the bill is to enable the Provincial Auditor to have access to the financial records of crown agencies, grant recipients and crown-controlled corporations. The auditor is authorized to audit the financial statements of grant recipients. Auxiliary provisions are included making it an offence to obstruct the auditor's mandate, to allow the auditor to examine people under oath and to require information to be kept confidential.

It's important that the Legislative Assembly, through its officer the Provincial Auditor, holds grant recipients, including schedule A agencies, completely and totally accountable.

DAY NURSERIES AMENDMENT ACT, 2000 LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES GARDERIES

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 181, An Act to amend the Day Nurseries Act to allow up to seven children to be cared for in rural areas

without requiring a licence under the Act / *Projet de loi 181, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les garderies afin d'autoriser, dans les régions rurales, la garde de sept enfants au plus sans devoir obtenir un permis prévu par la Loi.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I was prompted to bring forward this bill when I was approached by many concerned young families in my riding, as well as a follow-up letter from the mayor of the municipality of Nation, who expressed their concern for the availability of daycare facilities for children in rural areas.

A large part of my riding, as well as many others, is rural. Access to public daycare is non-existent and access to private home daycare is limited due to restrictions in place under the present legislation of the Day Nurseries Act.

The purpose of the amendment I have proposed today is to exempt day nurseries and private home daycare agencies that receive or provide care for no more than seven children from the licence requirements of the act if the nurseries or agencies are located in a rural area or in a town or village with a population of fewer than 3,000.

I feel the proposed change for premises to receive up to seven children in their care, rather than five, will provide some relief for young families in rural communities.

1400

DEMOCRATIC HERITAGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRESERVATION ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA PRÉSERVATION ARCHÉOLOGIQUE DU PATRIMOINE DÉMOCRATIQUE

Mr Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 182, An Act to ensure the preservation of the site of Toronto's first parliament buildings / *Projet de loi 182, Loi visant à assurer la préservation du site des premiers édifices parlementaires de Toronto.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): The bill is intended to ensure the preservation of the site of Toronto's Parliament Buildings, built in 1798 and 1820.

Section 2 provides that the site is deemed to have been designated under part VI.

Section 3 provides that the minister responsible for the administration of that act shall ensure that a full archaeological excavation and investigation is conducted and shall promote the purchase of the site and its donation to the city of Toronto, the construction of a museum and the provision of operating funds for the museum.

WOMEN'S EQUITY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ
À L'ÉGARD DES FEMMES

Mrs Bountrogianni moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 183, An Act to establish real equality for women in the province of Ontario and to provide the essential benefits required to promote equal access to opportunity / Projet de loi 183, Loi établissant une véritable égalité pour les femmes de l'Ontario et fournissant les avantages essentiels à la promotion de l'égalité des chances.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): The purpose of the bill is to establish real equality for women in the province of Ontario and to provide the essential benefits needed to promote equal access to opportunity for women.

The government of Ontario should:

(a) move toward the reality of pay equity with equal pay for equal work as outlined in existing legislation;

(b) ensure that existing laws are complied with;

(c) introduce one year paternity leave for new parents;

(d) address the problem of violence against women and implement the emergency measures introduced by the cross-sectoral violence against women strategy group;

(e) reinvest in the essential services for women, such as health care, counselling, legal aid, neighbourhood and community supports, emergency shelters, crises lines and second-stage housing; and

(f) promote equality of women in Ontario so that gender, race, ethnicity, economic status or education attainment do not provide a barrier to employment opportunity.

BRAIN TUMOUR

AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE MOIS
DE LA SENSIBILISATION
AUX TUMEURS CÉRÉBRALES

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 184, An Act to encourage awareness of the need for the early detection and treatment of brain tumours / Projet de loi 184, Loi visant à favoriser la sensibilisation à la nécessité du dépistage et du traitement précoces des tumeurs cérébrales.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): This bill points out that early detection and treatment of brain tumours is vital to survive this devastating disease. Brain tumours strike people of all ages, from newborns to seniors, crossing all economic, social and ethnic boundaries in all walks of life. Brain tumour research, patient and family

support services and awareness among the general public are essential to promote early detection and treatment of brain tumours. The bill proposes that the month of October in each year be proclaimed Brain Tumour Awareness Month.

I'm introducing this bill now to give the public a chance to tell us whether or not they think its passage would help in fighting brain tumours.

PORTABLE HEART
DEFIBRILLATOR ACT, 2000LOI DE 2000 SUR LES DÉFIBRILLATEURS
CARDIAQUES PORTATIFS

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 185, An Act to help save the lives of Ontarians who suffer from cardiac arrest by promoting the widespread availability and use of portable heart defibrillators in public places / Projet de loi 185, Loi visant à contribuer à sauver la vie des Ontariens qui souffrent d'un arrêt cardiaque en promouvant la disponibilité et l'usage généralisés de défibrillateurs cardiaques portatifs dans les lieux publics.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): The bill would require that portable heart defibrillators be made available and installed in significant public buildings, including privately owned buildings such as shopping centres, arenas and stadiums that have significant public access.

These portable defibrillators are about the size of a laptop computer. They cost about the same amount as a laptop computer. The United States has just passed similar legislation. This will save thousands of lives in the province of Ontario if one day we have these as readily available, hopefully, as we have fire extinguishers. I hope we get one here as soon as possible.

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD
AMENDMENT ACT
(ELECTRICITY RATES), 2000LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA COMMISSION
DE L'ÉNERGIE DE L'ONTARIO
(TARIFS D'ÉLECTRICITÉ)

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 186, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 to provide for protection against increases in the rates charged for the distribution of electricity / Projet de loi 186, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario de façon à prévoir une protection contre les augmentations des tarifs exigés pour la distribution d'électricité.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): This bill amends the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, to limit increases that the Ontario Energy Board can approve or affix in the rates that distributors charge for distributing electricity to consumers.

As a result of subsection 78(2) of the act, a distributor cannot distribute electricity unless the Ontario Energy Board has made an order under section 78 approving or fixing the distribution rates. Also, any increases are limited to the percentage annual increase in the consumer price index for Canada for prices of all items as published by Statistics Canada. This bill will protect Ontario consumers against sharp increases.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(iii), the House shall meet until 12 midnight on Wednesday, December 20, 2000, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

REFERRAL OF BILL 155

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 72(a), the order for second reading of Bill 155, An Act to provide civil remedies for organized crime and other unlawful activities, be discharged and the bill be referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): This past September, I outlined a program of continued progress and sustained growth for the people of this province. That program can be described in seven words: more to do to keep Ontario strong.

Today, as we prepare to return to our families and constituencies for the holiday season, I'm pleased to report that we have met the objectives we set for the fall and for the entire year.

In the past year, we have continued our drive to replace an outdated and financially troubled health care system with a modern system that is accessible to all. We have continued to invest in quality education and to expand results-oriented educational opportunities for our young people. We have continued to ease the burden on the taxpayers of Ontario by returning some of their hard-earned money to them.

1410

We have continued with our aggressive welfare reforms, replacing a handout with a hand up. We have continued to stand behind our men and women in uniform. With them, we have worked to create safer streets and communities throughout the entire province of Ontario. We have taken strong new actions to protect Ontario's environment for today and again for generations to come. We've asked the people of this province to join in a partnership that will build a brighter future for all of Ontario's children. In short, we're keeping our promises, we're honouring our commitments, we're doing what we said we would do, and we will continue to do this.

Today, Ontario is once again leading the nation in producing jobs and prosperity. From September 1995 to August 2000, more than 725,000 jobs were created in Ontario. Since meeting that target, an additional 105,000 jobs have been created, putting us on target to keep our Blueprint commitment to create 825,000 net new jobs over the next five years.

The province is indeed on track to achieving its second consecutive budgetary surplus. Thanks to the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, passed in December 1999, the hard-earned money of Ontario taxpayers is now protected by law.

This year, we once again gave much-needed tax relief to the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario. We promised to return more than \$1 billion to Ontario taxpayers in the form of personal income tax rebates. Today, I'm proud to report that almost 5 million Ontario taxpayers have received their cheques.

Our efforts to reduce taxes have drawn praise from experts and leaders of all political stripes, including Prime Minister Chrétien. Recently, the Prime Minister told an audience in the United States: "Our tax system is now very competitive with that of the Americans. If you look at Ontario, the income tax, federal and provincial, is competitive with New York, Michigan, California and the state of Washington." Thank you, Mr Prime Minister, for recognizing Ontario's leadership in cutting taxes.

To help taxpayers keep even more of their hard-earned income, we introduced in November the Balanced Budgets for Brighter Futures Act. The act would enable the Ontario government to reduce personal provincial income tax rates, without interference from the federal government.

For our economy to attract new investment and create even more jobs, a balance must be struck between employers and employees in the workplace. The Labour Relations Amendment Act, introduced in November, is meant to create that balance by strengthening the right of employees to choose whether they want to be represented by a union, and by requiring union bosses earning more than \$100,000 a year to disclose their incomes, paralleling the public service and broader public service. We've also taken steps to extend parental leave for working families and create fair and modern standards in the workplace.

Since we took office, 568,742 Ontarians have left the province's welfare rolls. This is not an abstract number; rather, it represents 568,742 personal success stories. To help even more people to escape that trap, we've been exploring ways to help those who've had trouble finding work because of substance abuse problems. This government will not turn its back on anyone who needs a hand moving from welfare to work.

The people of Ontario expect and the people of Ontario deserve modern health care. That's why our team continues to reform and improve our province's health care system. Even in the face of unilateral funding cuts by the federal government, we've increased health care spending operating funding by \$4.4 billion since taking office, including \$850 million for Ontario's hospitals this year alone in increased funding.

In the past several months, we've continued to lead the nation in health reform by making landmark changes to the way people use the health care system. Our goal? Better access to the care provided by doctors and nurses, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

We are creating Telehealth Ontario to give people in the 416 and 905 areas access to round-the-clock health information and advice from a registered nurse. We have kept our commitment to increase access to quality health care in northern Ontario with the enhancement of dialysis and cancer care centres and hospital services throughout the region. We have laid the cornerstone for the health care system of the future with the introduction of legislation to protect the privacy of personal health information of the people of Ontario.

We will be announcing additional health reforms in the coming year.

There can be no greater gift than the gift of life. That's why, through the Trillium Gift of Life Network Act, we hope to make it easier for individuals to give the gift of a vitally needed organ or tissue to a loved one, to a neighbour or to a fellow Ontarian.

This government continues to fight for the right of all our children to get a quality education. That's why we developed a new curriculum, from kindergarten to grade 12. That's why we now require province-wide testing and standards for students. That's why we'll be implementing province-wide testing for our teachers.

We've made major changes, and today our children are learning more and they're performing better. The results of the most recent International Mathematics and

Science Study demonstrates that our reforms are working. In the past five years, Ontario students have made significant progress in both math and science when compared to school children in other countries. Ontario students are now better prepared to compete and excel in a knowledge-driven world. There is still more to do, but our education reforms, and our kids, are now definitely on the right track.

We are determined that Ontario's school children receive a first-class education, inside and outside the classroom. We have been fair and reasonable with the unions representing our teachers. Progress is being made and many boards have reached agreements with their teachers. But in the time ahead, as we strive toward promoting co-instructional activities in all boards and all schools, parents and families can count on this government to stand by them.

We are also working for choice and we are working for excellence in higher education. That's why our proposed Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act will give students an expanded opportunity for post-secondary education by permitting the establishment of private degree-granting universities in Ontario.

From the outset this government has come down solidly on the side of law-abiding citizens, on the side of victims of crime, on the side of the men and women in uniform throughout this province who uphold the law. In this session we introduced the Domestic Violence Protection Act and the Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act, because for too long the scales of justice in our country have tipped in favour of the offender.

In October we introduced legislation banning the sale of imitation handguns to those under 18, to better protect the public and the police. The Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act, if passed, would take the profit out of unlawful activity by hitting organized crime where it hurts—in the wallet. The Corrections Accountability Act will ensure that any reduction in an inmate's sentence is earned and that offenders stay drug-free. We are also working to give victims of crime a greater say in parole hearings of our offenders and to protect our children and young people from sexual exploitation.

1420

The tragic events of Walkerton have served as a wake-up call for all of us. To ensure that the right lessons are learned and such tragedies do not occur again, we have introduced a province-wide drinking water protection regulation, one that sets tough standards for large waterworks and is considered the toughest in Canada.

We have also passed the Toughest Environmental Penalties Act, giving the Ontario government the power to impose on all major polluters the largest fines and longest jail terms in Canada.

To preserve our natural heritage, we have announced a \$100-million investment in Ontario's Living Legacy, the largest expansion of protected natural areas in our province's history.

Finally, our team has taken positive action in what is perhaps the most important matter of all: our children. In November, I announced the creation of Ontario's Promise, the partnership for children and youth. At its heart, Ontario's Promise is about creating new partnerships to help us do more for our children by working together. To date, Ontario's Promise has enlisted eight new corporate partners with total commitments of \$23 million. To further promote creative partnerships for children, we announced the launch of the \$30-million early years challenge fund earlier this month.

In September, our team renewed its drive for more efficient government, for more jobs, for lower taxes, for safer streets, for a cleaner environment, for higher education standards and for better health care.

In short, we continued to champion the principles of the Common Sense Revolution. Throughout the fall and throughout this year, these principles have guided every action this government has taken.

The voters of Ontario support the principles of the Common Sense Revolution because these principles have returned hope and they've returned growth and they've returned opportunity to this province. They have restored fiscal responsibility to the government of this province and they have restored good government to the people of this province.

But while we have accomplished much, the work of fixing government, of reforming government, of improving government goes on. Since our election, we have accomplished much, including the achievements of a very busy and productive fall, but there is still more to do to keep Ontario strong.

That's why in the coming session we will continue to put forth on behalf of the people of Ontario an agenda based on continued progress, not complacency, an agenda based on sustained growth, not the status quo. That's why we will continue to keep our promises and to honour our commitments. In short, we will continue to do what we said we would do. The Common Sense Revolution will continue.

That revolution will keep our province at the forefront of economic growth and job creation. It will raise the bar for quality education and modern, affordable and accessible health care. It will continue to enhance and expand our parks and our wilderness areas. And it will provide a cleaner environment and safer streets and communities for all of our citizens. Together, these efforts will maintain and enhance a quality of life second to none in the world.

Mr Speaker, I understand this is scheduled to be the last of this Legislature before the holiday season. I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank all of the members of the Legislature who have contributed to a very productive session and wish all members and their families and their staff and their staff's families, including all of the officers of the Legislature, from the Clerk and the Clerk's office to the pages, to wish you all a very happy holiday season and a very healthy and prosperous new year.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): The Premier of Ontario has a very selective memory. Do you know how we started this session this year in January? You had the resignation of your Tory MPP over your broken promise and forced amalgamation in the Hamilton area. That resulted in our new member, Ted McMeekin, joining the Ontario Liberal Party. We forgot to talk about that: a 20,000-vote move in just a few short months. That's what the Ontario voters said about the Mike Harris agenda. We're forgetting to tell the people what has happened in Ontario in this last year.

In the spring session of this year, we brought to this Legislature the scandals at the ORC. We remember the Ontario Realty Corp scandals. Now we have yet another OPP investigation under the Mike Harris government.

We talked about the Premier's own attendance record in this House and we demand it be 100%, but so far you're less than 35% attendance during question period, when you're to be held accountable to the people of Ontario. That's what we expect of the Premier. That's not what we got this year out of the Premier of Ontario.

I ask you some very basic questions. In this last year, is our health care system better? Our party knows the answer is no. We had to suffer through and watch day to day the Fleuelling inquiry after a young man died at the hands of the emergency system of our hospitals in the greater Toronto area, something that should never have happened. But thanks to cuts to the hospital system, we left that young man wanting. It shouldn't have happened, and that was under your watch, Premier. You forgot to talk about Mr Fleuelling, who's not here to celebrate Christmas with his family.

I ask you, are the schools in Ontario better? Our party knows that the answer to that is no. We have today an entire generation of young people, high school attendees, who have never known peace in their high school, who have never known what it would be like to have government and school boards and teachers and parents and students actually get along for the betterment of education. Today we have our fifth, final year of more war in the classroom. We heard that yesterday by our own Minister of Education talking about "capitulation," another war term. That's not what our students deserve, but that's what our students got for yet another year.

I ask this question: is the environment better in Ontario this year? We watch day to day the Walkerton inquiry. At the hands of what system and whose responsibility is it that seven people are not in the province to celebrate Christmas this year? We watched with interest: what role did the Ontario government have to play in cuts to the Ministry of the Environment that may have cost those people their lives?

Those are the questions we asked you all this year. Those are not the answers we got this year. Instead we got a litany of photo ops, of the Minister of Community and Social Services, the one cabinet minister who's supposed to be respectful and helpful to the poor, out on a photo op rampage, throwing needles on the ground in a

big show of being tough on poor people. We're embarrassed by that kind of behaviour by a minister. It shouldn't happen, but it happened under your watch this year. You forgot to talk about poor people, Mike Harris. That's part of your job.

We ask you the question: is the environment any better? Did you come with more forceful rules? We have no more people in the Ministry of the Environment to enforce those rules. What good is better law, are better fines, if we don't have the individuals to enforce those fines or rules?

We ask those questions because the people of Ontario ask those very same questions. In light of the Walkerton inquiry, these were your words: "What we promise you is rules around agriculture operations." Did we get rules in agriculture operations? We didn't get rules about agriculture operations, and those were your words.

You promised an Ontario disability act. I ask the caucus, did we get an Ontario disability act? We still have disabled people in Ontario who are asking this government for help to lead a full life in this province, and you've let them down. One more year of no action on the part of people with disabilities. I ask the Speaker, could we have more of a Premier who doesn't give us the answers? We, the Ontario Liberal Party and Dalton McGuinty, will keep you to account on behalf of all the people of Ontario.

1430

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Speaker, the Premier started out his statement by boasting about Ontario's over \$1-billion surplus.

He started out the fall session by saying his government was going to do all it could to put an end to violence against women. One hundred and thirty women's groups came here and gave this government a long list of things they could do and need to do to ensure that no more women die as a result of domestic violence. We need to recount that this government told those 130 women's organizations to basically leave, that there was nothing this government was prepared to do. And do you know what? This government was honest about that, because the only thing they've done with respect to violence against women is to pass a piece of legislation that will allow an abuser to keep an arsenal of weapons. That is their response to the over 40 women, on average, in this province who die as a result of violence in the home.

When a government has over \$1 billion in surplus you would think we should be celebrating here today that a government has made an investment to do something about that problem. Instead, we are pointing out that this is a government that has done virtually nothing about that problem.

The Premier talks about improving our education system. Well, the Premier should go out there and talk to the tens of thousands of parents who have children who need special education, who have need for special education and can't get it because the budget isn't there to meet the needs of all the children in Ontario who need and deserve special education. Or the Premier should go

out and talk to all of the parents who are now dealing with high school students who are saying, "School really isn't very interesting any more since we don't have extracurricular activities, since the things that made school interesting and attractive and created some energy around the school have gone." And why have they gone? They've gone because this government, this government that claims to know everything about education, insisted that they were going to ram through legislation that has resulted in teachers being able to say, "If I have to choose between extended hours in the classroom and time for extracurricular activities, I'm sorry, I won't have the time to do the extracurricular activities that I used to." That is not improving the education for our children, nor is it improving the education for our young people or those people who need to return to post-secondary education when we continue to have the highest debt loads in the country for students, when tuition fees have increased dramatically yet the means made available to students to finance their education have not kept up.

We know from talking, not just to students but also to faculty members who teach at our colleges and universities, that we are headed for a major problem in terms of post-secondary education. This government simply doesn't have a strategy other than saying, "Open it up to the private sector." But the very private sector institutions that this government is talking to and talking about have a deplorable record in the United States, have been investigated and have been charged and convicted of fraud with respect to student loans and have, frankly, in many cases left students high and dry without the education they paid for when they've simply moved on into another jurisdiction. That's this government's answer to expanding and increasing the capacity and capability of the post-secondary education system.

But the greatest travesty of all is this: workers across Ontario now, thanks to this government, can look forward to 60-hour workweeks. Workers who used to be able to count on a two-week vacation with their families can now recognize that the two-week vacation taken together is gone, that more and more their vacation time will be a day here, a day there. Workers who used to look forward to a weekend with their family can now recognize that in most cases that is gone.

This is not improving the quality of life for Ontario citizens. This is depleting it, while this government puts more money in the hands of their corporate friends. You're going to be held accountable for that now and in the future.

DEFERRED VOTES

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 147, An Act to revise the law related to employment

standards / Projet de loi 147, Loi portant révision du droit relatif aux normes d'emploi.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1435 to 1440.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Palladini, Al
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Eves, Ernie L.	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry	Newman, Dan	Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Conway, Sean G.	Martel, Shelley
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin	Parsons, Ernie
Bountrogianni, Marie	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Sergio, Mario
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Smitherman, George
Cleary, John C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	
Colle, Mike	Lankin, Frances	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 57; the nays are 28.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We also have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 139. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1444 to 1449.

The Speaker: Mr Klees has moved third reading of Bill 139, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Palladini, Al
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Eves, Ernie L.	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed?

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Conway, Sean G.	Martel, Shelley
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin	Parsons, Ernie
Bountrogianni, Marie	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Sergio, Mario
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Smitherman, George
Cleary, John C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	
Colle, Mike	Lankin, Frances	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 57; the nays are 28.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

MINISTRY OF TRAINING, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT AU MINISTÈRE DE LA FORMATION ET DES COLLÈGES ET UNIVERSITÉS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 132, An Act to enact the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, repeal the Degree Granting Act and change the title of and make amendments to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities Act / Projet de loi 132, Loi édictant la Loi de 2000 favorisant le choix et l'excellence au niveau postsecondaire, abrogeant la Loi sur l'attribution de grades universitaires et modifiant le titre et le texte de la Loi sur le ministère des Collèges et Universités.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1452 to 1457.

The Speaker: Would the members kindly take their seats, please.

Mrs Cunningham has moved third reading of Bill 132, An Act to enact the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, repeal the Degree Granting Act and change the title of and make amendments to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities Act.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Palladini, Al
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Eves, Ernie L.	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Conway, Sean G.	Lankin, Frances
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin	McMeekin, Ted
Bountrogianni, Marie	Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Hampton, Howard	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitheman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 57; the nays are 27.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I want to direct a question on this last day of sitting, apparently, to the Premier. I want to ask you about your own hard-nosed, bumbling attitude toward education and what it's doing to deprive the students of this province of the education they deserve. In particular, I want to ask you about your comments of yesterday. Yes, teachers support our plan to put peace in high schools. They do. But so do

parents and students and school boards and people all across this province.

Apparently, Premier, you have a problem with that. Last year you unilaterally acted to change conditions in high schools. You created a mess. We've given you a fair, balanced compromise, something you can act on today, and put extracurriculars and better learning conditions in our high schools by February. Premier, this is your last opportunity to do something positive for the high school students of this province. Will you today stand up and do this? Will you agree, will you reconsider and put in place peace in our high schools?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know that you and your leader have been claiming that everybody's supportive, and editorially, although I did read this editorial. It said:

"This peace plan sounds as if it was crafted by Neville Chamberlain. It's an attempt to appease the teachers' unions, with no guarantee of any better co-operation on extracurriculars.

"The unions like it, which is not surprising, since McGuinty's plan means a reduced workload for their members....

"There are practical problems, too. McGuinty's solution would reduce the number of students each teacher faces, and that would mean hiring 3,700 teachers. It would also cost \$150 million."

I think what we have here is, you revitalize a three-year-old union plan, ignoring all the changes that have been brought in by the minister, including the hiring of thousands of new teachers to actually increase quality and reduce class size. What we have here is a desire among teachers, educators, trustees and parents to see as long-term solution—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Premier's time is up. Supplementary?

Mr Kennedy: Premier, your actions and your words don't reflect what the parents and the students of this province are saying. Today in the gallery we have Sue Lockington. Sue Lockington is with the Victoria Park Secondary School school council. She is here today to tell you, "It's encouraging to hear the proactive approach of Dalton McGuinty's peace plan. A resolution needs to be done as soon as possible. The damage done to the teaching profession, the lack of trust in the education system, and the emotional and physical well-being of students are all being ignored."

Now, Premier, you're in your place. Ms Lockington is here. This is a parent telling you what the needs of her school are. She represents a school council that is charged with that responsibility, and that has been frustrated over the last 105 days.

Dalton McGuinty has done more in six days since he released this peace plan than you've done in six years. You have the chance today to do something positive. You've got two choices. You can pass this plan today or you can table your own. I guess you have a third choice. If you're not courageous enough to do either of those

things, you can slink off and go back to wherever you go for holidays and do nothing for these parents.

Which is it going to be, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: Also in the Legislature today are a number of Ontario students. This is the report of the Ontario Student Trustees' Association. They say the government must make changes which facilitate long-term solutions when attempting to rectify the situation, not knee-jerk, three-year-old instantaneous-type solutions you propose.

They talk about how every attempt must be made to avert the threat of labour action every second or third year. They want the negotiations sped up. They say this: "The loss of these opportunities due to work-to-rule destroys school communities," and they go on to condemn using students as pawns through the work-to-rule campaigns of some of the union leaders.

The report goes on with many other areas supportive of long-term solutions that the minister is attempting to achieve. I might say to you that I think we all support the minister's actions and we support the teachers' actions to ensure that we don't have the kind of labour disruptions, holding students as pawns, that we've had over the last couple of years.

Mr Kennedy: The language of this government, the idea of a fight, of a war, of pawns, of having to capitulate—that is what is going on here. Your attitude is not serving these students particularly well. If you'd read their whole statement, the last page, Premier—you might want to go there. You might want to talk to Karl Baldauf, Peter Doelman and Darya Nadar afterwards about what they want.

They held a consultation. I know that word is a little strange to you, but they actually went out and talked to students. These are student trustees from around the province, and they've talked to the students. This is what they told the Premier and the minister: they have said, after looking at the problem, that one of things that would be helpful to do would be to look at the increase in the length of school periods to meet the ministry's new standards, whether the curriculum is being delivered and understood. They recognize it isn't happening in this province, and they see the increase in school periods, exactly what is in the peace plan, as something to be done.

Premier, because you've seen fit to endorse some of the comments of these students, will you pay them some decent respect by listening to all of it, including the call to action, including the call to consider exactly what is in our peace plan? Will you do that today?

Hon Mr Harris: As you know, the minister has encouraged this group to go out and consult with students. She has met with this group. I think they are well aware of the minister's desire to have extensive consultations all across the province with all groups. I have their report here. They say to leave no stone unturned, but what they mostly say is to make sure it's a long-term solution; make sure this solution isn't one that is arrived at in a coercive way, that is knee-jerk, that is short-term. They talk about the extended school day. As you know, the

union offered an hour extended school day at no cost. That was the union position, but for some reason or other, it wasn't—

Interjection: That wasn't the union position.

Hon Mr Harris: Well, it was proposed by OSSTF. It wasn't proposed by the current leader of OSSTF, who clearly has your leader in his back pocket. He wants even more and more, and less workload and more money. We understand that.

This report that you refer to also says, "Many of the problems in the Canadian education system are due to the approximately 2.5"—

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up.

New question.

Mr Kennedy: Back to the Premier. I can't speak for Mrs Lockington. She's there to speak to you, Premier. She's here. She's made special arrangements. She had to pick up her child. She stayed through all our votes, because she wants you to respond to her needs. You've chosen not to do that.

Art Buckman, who is the chair of the Upper Canada District School Board, says, "I heartily support the restoration of extracurricular high school activities. It's vitally important to have them for next semester. Dalton McGuinty's education peace plan is the initiative we need."

He also goes on to say that this is an issue they can't settle. This is an issue, they say, to be settled by you at the provincial level.

Premier, I want you again to reference yourself to the students you were kind enough to reference but not respond to, and to the parents. I want to ask you, are you going to slink out of this House, are you going to take off, having done nothing for the problems affecting our high schools, or will you pass Bill 165, a very simple amendment to the Education Act? Will you today give us your solution?

Hon Mr Harris: The disruption of Bill 165 that cost the taxpayers a quarter of a billion dollars to achieve not one whit of quality in education—presumably you are opposed to the minister's plan that we are implementing to spend a quarter of a billion dollars to hire all these teachers to reduce class size, the same number of teachers—in fact more teachers—to reduce class size. For some reason or other, you want the minister to cancel that, cancel all those teachers, cancel the lower PTR, make sure every new teacher who is hired is to reduce workload. We understand the union wants more dues. We understand the union wants a reduced workload. We understand that is Earl Manners's position. That is not the position of anybody who wants quality education in this province.

1510

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Just keep bombing. Keep on the war. Mike's got to win the war.

Mr Kennedy: My colleagues refer to the Premier sometimes as Bomber Harris, and this is an exact indication, because what has happened instead is that this government unilaterally imposed something on all the

schools, all the school boards and all the students. Rather than come back to the table, the teachers have said they would work an extra half an hour. The government doesn't want any of that. The students have said, "We'll go to school for an extra half an hour." The parents have said, "We'll make the adjustments we need to make." The parents of this province are saying about the Liberal initiative, "We are finally seeing some leadership to find a solution to the turmoil in our schools. This plan would truly give our kids more quality time while restoring dignity to our teachers and harmony in our schools." Cathy Balsys, a mother of four, another member of a school council, says she is so pleased that someone is finally putting the needs of kids first.

Premier, this is your last opportunity before you head off for holidays. You've got an opportunity to put kids first, to quit playing around with all the bombast you want to throw. Every group in the province has agreed that there's a need to do something to restore peace in the high schools. There's a solution on the table.

The Speaker: Order. The member's time is up.

Hon Mr Harris: No.

Mr Kennedy: That one word, Premier, summarizes the amount of concern you have, the amount of interest you have. In one syllable, one word, you exempt yourself from your responsibility. We see this House, these government members, afraid to stand up for their students. They will be headed back to their communities. They will hear from their students and their parents. They couldn't, in this House or in their caucus, speak up.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Will the member take his seat. The member for Stoney Creek, come to order. Sorry, to the member.

Mr Kennedy: It seems that the Premier is anxious to escape. He's not willing to buckle down and do something, but instead he wants to get away from this problem. He's not willing to listen to trustees, parents, students or teachers. The members opposite see something wrong in listening to school teachers, whom we want to be able to teach our kids.

Mr Harris, I must give you this. On January 9, we'll be in Durham region. We'll be there speaking to parents and students. We'll be there seeking a solution. I challenge you to be there with your solution. If you're not—

The Speaker: The member's time is up. Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me say that for both myself and the minister this is not our last day at work. We're concerned every day. We're concerned as we continue to advance. The minister continues to meet and consult. We'll not be waiting till January 9 to continue to meet with parents, to continue to meet with students, to continue to encourage parties to come together. You are fixated on a three-year-old, union-led solution that does nothing for class size, nothing for quality education, nothing but massively increase the cost without any benefit to the long term, without any benefit to quality. I'm sorry you're fixated on only the one solution that many in the province have said is the wrong solution, but at least

they've recognized the problem. We've all recognized the challenge and the problem. The problem is that unions are using students as pawns in their negotiations, and it has to stop.

Your solution—

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. This morning I was at Tent City down on the Toronto waterfront. Tent City is where literally hundreds of people who are homeless have come together to build temporary housing at a time of the year when it is freezing outside. They acknowledge that this is not the best solution, but they point out that it is better than freezing on the streets and it's better than your temporary shelters, which are too often unsafe and unhealthy.

While we were there, we learned that your Ministry of the Environment is trying to push Home Depot, which owns the property, to evict these people. Premier, why would your government want to try to push Home Depot to evict these people when all they're trying to do is build temporary housing so they don't freeze to death on the street? Why would your government be trying to do that?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I don't have all the information before me, but as I understand, the Minister of the Environment has concerns about the contamination on that land. Therefore, he has concerns about the health of these folks. I'm sorry you don't.

Mr Hampton: Premier, here is your solution. Your solution is to put them in temporary shelters, but when you actually sit down and look at United Nations' documentation, your temporary shelters don't even meet the standards for refugees in war-torn countries. According to the United Nations, that's the condition in your shelters. When you talk to a public health nurse, you will learn that tuberculosis is rampant in those temporary shelters. So people, for their own health and safety, are saying, "We would rather try to build something, as temporary as it may be, because it is better than the shelter system this government advocates for a solution."

Premier, I say again, your shelters, your solution to homelessness and affordable housing, don't even meet the United Nations' standards. Why are you trying to evict these people when Home Depot says, "It's OK if you build temporary shelters here. We're prepared to work with you and help you if you want to build temporary shelters here"? Why is your government trying to force Home Depot to evict them when their solution is certainly superior to the unsafe and unsanitary shelters that you're trying to put them in?

Hon Mr Harris: I want to thank the member for the advice, as off-base as it is.

Mr Hampton: The other point those people are trying to make is that while you boast about a surplus in excess of \$1.5 billion and, frankly, while your federal counterparts in Ottawa boast about a surplus, neither of you has

a strategy for affordable housing. While the cost of a two-bedroom apartment in this city and in other cities in this province has gone up by more than \$2,000 a year, there is no money to pay that kind of rent and there is no strategy for affordable housing. Since your answer is either to put them in unsafe, unsanitary, unhealthy shelters or to evict them when they're working with a private company to build something that would be better than your unsafe, unsanitary shelters, if that's the scenario we have now, would you at least come forward with an affordable housing strategy, since, by the way, as you boast, you have a surplus?

Hon Mr Harris: I want to understand. I think the leader of the New Democratic Party is saying the solution should be to leave these people outdoors, with no shelter, on contaminated land. I appreciate that is what you are saying we should do. That's the only inference any reasonable person could take from your question and what you're talking about today.

You criticize the Minister of the Environment for being concerned about their health and about them being outside on contaminated land. You talk about a government solution that is not the government's solution at all. There are others who are trying to assist them to at least have some form of temporary shelter.

What we're interested in are the long-term solutions of a job, of opportunity, of training, of breaking the cycle of poverty that we've been so successful at—maybe three, five, 20 times more successful than your government was with a solution.

We are concerned about anybody who does not have the resources for decent housing or food or shelter, in spite of the fact that we have the most generous programs in Canada, by every measure. If you look at the increase in poverty and in children living in poverty, it was the highest under your government and it is going down—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Premier's time is up.

1520

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Another question for the Premier. It is interesting to know that on the verge of Christmas, while your government has a huge surplus, you have no money for affordable housing and no interest in a strategy for affordable housing.

But I want to ask you about a confidential report that was given to your government three years ago by senior officials which pointed out to you how serious the problem was at Walkerton and other small communities across the province in terms of their water and sewer problems. Despite the fact that very senior officials brought this report to you and advised you once again of the seriousness of the problem, you ignored their advice and you ignored the confidential document they brought to you.

Premier, can you tell us why you ignored the concerns they raised about the safety of water treatment and the safety of sewage treatment in communities like Walkerton, when they clearly warned you three years ago?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'm not sure what confidential report you are talking about. If it's confidential, I guess I don't know about it.

I can tell you this: this government has never ignored any report, any suggestion of anything that would jeopardize any citizen anywhere in the province, including Walkerton, about water quality.

There was a report I saw in the media that was referred to which recommended that the private sector be put in charge of water facilities. If that's the report you're talking about, you're quite right: we did not accept that as one of I think about 20 recommendations when dealing with OCWA and water systems. Perhaps if the private sector ran anything, it is your position that it would be run better. That was the position of the column I saw in the paper today. Maybe you're an ideologue that way and you think everything has to be privatized. I don't know. What we tend to look for on this side of the House is what makes sense: private sector, public sector, government, extended public agency.

If there's another report you're referring to—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Premier's time is up. Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: I think we actually know the answer to the question. Your government was in fact in the process of downloading responsibility for water treatment and sewer treatment on to the municipality and downloading the costs of doing that. You didn't want to hear about the problems that already existed and you didn't want to hear about the further problems and the further threats to public health that would be created by that.

Premier, I want to ask you now, will you make that report public so that all the citizens of Ontario can see how clearly you were warned three and a half years ago and how much you cared about your agenda rather than caring about the public health of citizens across this province, and especially the public health of citizens in communities like Walkerton? Will you make that report public so that people across the province now can see just how negligent your government was in your duties?

Hon Mr Harris: I don't know why the leader of the New Democratic Party is so confused on this issue. Sewer and water have always been, since I've been elected, close to 20 years, under Progressive Conservative governments, Liberal governments, New Democratic Party governments and our government, a municipal responsibility.

I don't know what report you are referring to. If this information deals with the story that I read in the paper today, it's no secret report. I can tell you that there was a recommendation among a whole number—I can't tell you how many—suggesting that perhaps all sewer and water services should be privatized. If you want them all privatized, if that's your position, say so.

PARTICULATE EMISSIONS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. This question is about the largest single purveyor of dioxin in Ontario and probably across this country, the largest single source. I'm referring to the garbage incinerator called Swaru in Hamilton.

Minister, you will be aware that there was at the very least confusion over the provision of testing results, and at the very worst falsification of those testing results from the Swaru incinerator. As a result, it is my understanding that there is total confusion in the Hamilton area at this time. You will know that Swaru, by the way, spews its pollution across Hamilton and across the Niagara Peninsula.

Minister, could you tell us how it could possibly be that your ministry, understaffed as it is, was unable to obtain the information on the contamination coming from the Swaru incinerator and why to this point you've allowed Swaru to be the largest purveyor of dioxin in this country, allowing it to have six times the amount of dioxin that it's supposed to be allowed to purvey into the atmosphere?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): Our government is indeed committed to ensuring clean air for all Ontarians to breathe in our province. We're taking action now to ensure that a clean air legacy is left for generations to come.

As part of its waste disposal master plan, the region of Hamilton-Wentworth established Swaru, which is there as an incinerator in the Hamilton area.

My ministry is dedicated to the ongoing environmental protection of the area. That's why we have a focused review of some of the potential deficiencies in that area.

My ministry did receive an application for review under the Environmental Bill of Rights. Staff from the Ministry of the Environment have now completed their consideration of the Environmental Bill of Rights application for review on this project. Based on all of the information available, they have concluded that while a full technical review of the Swaru certificates of approval is not warranted, a focused review is appropriate to assess some of the potential deficiencies that ministry staff have identified.

Mr Bradley: That's an absolutely, totally unacceptable answer to a question. You have pollution spewing over Hamilton, over the Niagara region, over the surrounding area of Hamilton. You have the falsification of information being provided to your ministry. Your ministry doesn't have enough staff any more, as the Provincial Auditor said, to monitor anything, it seems. The auditor certainly indicated that in his report when he said a 25% staff reduction over the last four years has contributed to a 34% decrease in the number of ministry-initiated inspections conducted province-wide each year.

I ask the minister two specific questions: when are you going to make Swaru, this garbage incinerator, come into

compliance with what are considered to be the toughest regulations in this country—you always say that you have them in this province for garbage incinerators—and when are you going to end the practice of self-monitoring and self-regulation without the kind of supervision needed from your ministry so that the people of this province can be assured that we don't have a repetition of what's happened in other communities such as Walkerton and other areas in the province? How can you guarantee to the people of this province that Swaru is the only incinerator, industrial or otherwise, that is spewing forth this dioxin when you don't even have the proper supervision of the kind of testing that's going on at this time?

Hon Mr Newman: I say to the member opposite that dioxins are a part of the review the ministry is undertaking in this regard. They're going to be reviewed as part of our Canada-wide standards review. I have been informed by the deputy minister that dioxins will indeed be included in that review. That should be good news for the member opposite. We anticipate that the review will be concluded within the next couple of months. In fact, the progress of our review will be shared with both the applicants and the certificate holders with respect to that Swaru site.

But operation of the site has significantly reduced the amount of waste going to landfill and has extended the life of the landfill site. The incinerator also produces energy for sewage plant operations. As well, its air monitoring reports are submitted annually to the Ministry of the Environment.

1530

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Attorney General. During the holiday season our hearts and minds often go out to the children in our communities. I can tell you, as a parent of five children and as a parliamentarian, it is a concern to me that this government work to protect the children of not just my riding but of course all of the children across Ontario. Protecting children starts, as you know, Minister, at the prevention stage and it continues beyond the court system itself.

I was very encouraged by the introduction of your legislation yesterday. I'm wondering, Minister, if you could tell us what other initiatives you, your ministry and this government have taken to protect children in the early-prevention stage, right through the court system itself.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Durham for the question. This government has taken several initiatives to help protect children in the justice system with respect to children being exploited and victimized by prostitution. Yesterday I introduced new legislation that will protect children from the tragic fate of child prostitution, will give the police and children's aid workers the tools they need to place children in this situation in safe locations and disengage them from

pimps and remove them from street prostitution, adult entertainment facilities, massage parlours, bawdy houses, escort services, telephone and Internet sex lines, and the pornography industry.

In addition, with funds provided in the budget this year by the Minister of Finance, we've opened more than 20 new supervised access sites and centres. This is particularly important for people involved in family law disputes to ensure that they have supervised access for their children.

Thirdly, in the initiatives with respect to child-friendly courts, regrettably some children have to give evidence in court. We've expanded the number of child-friendly courts. There are 16 now in 13 locations, with more to be added next year.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you for that answer, Minister. Second, the justice system must take into account that children are not as mature as adults and, therefore, do not always fully understand the consequences of their actions. Nonetheless, our justice system must send a signal to our children and their parents that breaking the law does have serious consequences and that a simple slap on the wrist is not sufficient.

I'd like to ask the minister what steps he has taken to ensure that children learn a lesson about the consequence of breaking the law.

Hon Mr Flaherty: The member for Durham of course is absolutely right with respect to the serious problem of violent young offenders. Over the past year, this government has lobbied Ottawa repeatedly to repeal the Young Offenders Act and make the changes that the people of Ontario have told us they want made, including increases to the length of jail sentences for those who commit serious offences, requiring mandatory jail time for youth convicted of offences involving weapons, a guarantee that youth convicted of serious offences such as murder would serve full adult sentences and to stop forcing prosecutors to prove that an adult sentence is necessary for most serious violent offences.

Once again the calls for a change from Ontario have fallen on deaf ears with the Liberal government in Ottawa. The Young Offenders Act is a demonstrable objective failure both with respect to recidivism and with respect to graduation rates of young offenders to adult criminal courts in this province. We urge the federal government to repeal the Young Offenders Act.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier. It has to do with Ipperwash Provincial Park and the shooting death on September 6.

You have, over the last few years, maintained in the Legislature that you had absolutely no influence with the OPP actions. I quote one of the answers you gave. You said, "I determined nothing. I gave no direction, I gave no influence on it. We left that entirely to the OPP. I assumed there would be negotiations."

In a memo that has been released within the last 24 hours, it indicates that the day of the shooting death you met with the OPP commissioner, along with at least one other of your cabinet ministers, that they gave you advice that day—the police did, as well as the Deputy Attorney General—on how you should proceed, and you decided to ignore or to go against that advice and to seek a particular type of injunction.

My question is, do you still today stand by your comment, "I determined nothing. I gave no direction, I gave no influence on it. We left that entirely to the OPP. I assumed there would be negotiations"?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Absolutely.

Mr Phillips: You have indicated before, because the matter was before the courts, your reluctance to answer questions. I remind you that this OPP officer was charged in 1996, and the answers that you gave over the last five years have often been answers given when that matter was before the court. I think it is important for the OPP officer that you have indicated many times that you gave absolutely no direction.

Will you confirm today that you did meet with the OPP commissioner the day of the shooting, and will you indicate to us why you ignored the advice you were getting from the police on the type of injunction? I remind you, Premier, that you answered these questions when the matter was before the court and may very well have influenced the action in the courts.

Hon Mr Harris: The document you refer to I think was released months ago, and it confirms that the OPP commissioner was at a meeting that I was at, something I indicated quite freely five years ago at the time of the Ipperwash situation. I can tell you that the OPP commissioner sought an injunction and we gave him one.

WIARTON WILLIE

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): My question is to the Premier. Mr Premier, last February you forgot the rules. You forgot the part in MPP school where they tell you never to make fun of a national icon. Last February you did just that. You made fun of Wiarton Willie: you compared him to a Liberal senator. Actually, technically you made fun of Wee Wiarton Willie, Willie's successor, who just happened to be found in Ottawa, but that's beside the point. What you may not realize, Premier, is that the people of Wiarton have long memories, so with the help of the organizers of the Wiarton Willie Festival, I'm taking a pre-emptive step here. I'm going to educate you on the importance of that little rodent who resides in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and hopes to soon be in northern Ontario.

With your permission, I have presents to give to you from these tireless organizers: a CD which is highly enlightening about the history of the festival, and also a Wiarton Willie beanie.

Wiarton Willie will make his prediction on February 2, Mr Premier. My question to you is, will you display

this Wiarton Willie beanie in your office to show your pride in our provincial winter forecaster?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'd like to thank the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for the question. A beanie baby? I was hoping it was a beanie I could wear, but it's a Wiarton Willie beanie baby. I'll be happy to display it, of course.

But let me say that I think the member is referencing a speech I made last February to the Young Entrepreneurs organization. I remarked about the fact that Wiarton Willie had received an HRDC federal jobs grant from Jane Stewart. I pointed out in my speech, regrettably, that with his qualifications, sleeping all winter, working one day a year, I was surprised he hadn't been appointed a Liberal senator. Upon reflection, I want to acknowledge that comparing Wee Wiarton Willie to a Liberal senator is insulting to Wee Willie. I accept that. He works much harder than most Liberal senators. He's also more accurate than the weather forecasters on the CBC, I might add. I thank the honourable member again for the question and I assure him I will have this beanie on display in my office.

Mr Murdoch: Thank you, Premier, for your response and for showing both your pride in Wiarton Willie and your respect for the hard work he does, not only on Groundhog Day but on each and every day of the year. I think we all realize the importance of Groundhog Day. For me, I can't wait to see whether Wiarton Willie predicts an early spring or six more weeks of winter. I have found him to be a reliable forecaster, much more worthy of respect than the pale imitation found in Pennsylvania.

February 2 marks the big day, Premier. Will you personally show your respect to Wiarton Willie and be on hand when he makes his prediction for winter 2001?

Hon Mr Harris: I thank the honourable member and I thank the people of Wiarton for the very kind invitation. I know that each and every year they host a wonderful festival, and I know it does not occur without the very many volunteers in Wiarton who dedicate countless hours of their time. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate those volunteers and offer my best wishes for yet another successful festival.

I commit this to the member and the organizers: I'm going to check my schedule and I will get back to the member and I will get back to Wee Wiarton Willie as well. I assure them that wherever I am that day, I will be watching closely to see if Wee Wiarton Willie indeed sees his shadow.

1540

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. This is a copy of the September 6, 1995, memo, the day on which Dudley George was killed. Premier, this memo states that the OPP commissioner was called into the meeting. It states that Larry Taman, who was then the Deputy Attorney General, was at the meeting, that he was quite eloquent and forceful.

He cautioned about rushing into the situation with an ex parte injunction. He cautioned about interference with police discretion. But then the memo says, "But Premier and Hodgson came out strong ... decision to go ex parte appeared to have already been made."

Premier, what I find interesting about this memo is, can you tell us why it was only made available this summer, five years after Dudley George was killed?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think we made it available in September, right away, that we had planned to seek an ex parte injunction. We had a request from the OPP and it was our desire to seek an injunction.

Mr Hampton: I don't think that was an answer. This is quite germane evidence in the death of an unarmed man, and for some reason, your government kept it out of the public for five years.

Premier, I want to ask you this. You've always maintained that decisions to interfere at Ipperwash, decisions to get an ex parte injunction, were made not by your government, but this memo pretty clearly indicates that the OPP commissioner was called into the meeting, that you and your cabinet colleagues were warned, "Don't interfere with police discretion, don't force an ex parte injunction," and then it says, "But Premier and Hodgson came out strong." I think any reasonable person would conclude that you and Mr Hodgson directly interfered, that you and Mr Hodgson made the decision over the heads of the OPP commissioner and the Deputy Attorney General to directly interfere with Ipperwash. If that's not the right conclusion, Premier, please give us your explanation.

Hon Mr Harris: As I have indicated publicly on many occasions over the last number of years, the OPP requested an injunction and we responded to their request for the ex parte injunction. Unfortunately, as you know, that injunction was never acted upon because of a tragedy that intervened, a tragedy that has been a court case, a tragedy that's now part of a civil suit. The document you have, one we made available, is part of that court case. It clearly indicates that we were asked for an injunction; we responded with an injunction.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last week I had the opportunity to be on an ice surface doing pirouettes and figure 8s—not a very pretty sight. Unfortunately, I was in my van on Highway 401 at the time.

It is common knowledge that the quality of snowplowing in this province has severely deteriorated in the past few years. It's a safety issue, with thousands and thousands of motorists on the highways every day. In fact, the highways have become the lifeblood of our industry.

The privatization so strongly heralded has not brought better service. The auditor said that the contracts were given to a few companies and the equipment was given away. The equipment in Ontario used to be out on the

highways before the storm started. Now we're seeing them after the storm is finished. The 401 is now routinely closed because of accidents. I'm saying the 401, but it could be any highway in this province.

Ontario was once the leader in snow control on provincial highways. Minister, will you pledge to return to the snow removal standards that were in place in 1990?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): Safety is our top priority. Let me say to the member unequivocally that there has been no change whatsoever in the standards that we apply to winter maintenance. There has been no reduction in winter maintenance. MTO standards are maintained by private contractors before, during and after a storm. There are absolutely no legs to what you're saying.

Let me quote Bob Beatty, an OPP traffic sergeant from Thunder Bay, for example. He was saying, "I would say there is more sanding being done and more plowing being done." That's rather interesting.

The allegations that you make are absolutely groundless. All of the contractors stand to lose their contracts if they do not comply with very strict MTO standards, which are not different to when you were the government or when the NDP were the government or since we've been the government.

Mr Parsons: You need to ask your chauffeur what the roads are actually like. You need to get out of your vehicle and ask some truck drivers what the highways are like in this province.

The basic problem is the contract that you signed with the private operators. They receive the same number of dollars whether they plow all night or whether they don't plow at all. You make our most disadvantaged citizens partake in workfare, be drug-tested and be humiliated—no work, no pay—yet you have a corporate workfare that says to your friends with the highway contracts, they have an incentive to not work for the money. Very clearly, corporate welfare is what's being undertaken here. Everyone else in Ontario has to work for their money. Those signs along the highway saying "Your Ontario tax dollars at work" should reflect the actual situation.

Minister, will you renegotiate the contracts to require the firms to be paid only for what they do, rather than the present lump sum contracts?

Hon Mr Turnbull: First, let me reiterate: there has been no change in maintenance standards. Second, the companies can lose the contract if they do not maintain the roads. Third, we have achieved a savings in the cost of maintaining our roads. That is quite clear.

Lastly, I want to say it is very clear that we have to have people—

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): That's not what the auditor says. Your nose is growing.

Hon Mr Turnbull: With all due respect to the leader of the third party, you are the government that didn't maintain our roads. Let the record show that we, as a government, are spending more money on maintaining our roads than either the Liberals or the NDP, and we are

expanding the system. You, on the other hand, neglected our roads, and you should hang your heads in shame.

AMUSEMENT DEVICES

Mr Brian Coburn (Ottawa-Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I believe some new regulations have been put in place for the province's amusement ride operators. I understand that the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, which in charge of ride safety, falls under your ministry and your jurisdiction. Could you please tell the House what these new recommendations are and when they will be implemented?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Thank you for the question. I am very pleased to say that last week the Technical Standards and Safety Authority announced that they have issued a director's order outlining new licensing requirements for operators.

Now ride operators must provide additional information about the training and experience of amusement device mechanics before they are awarded a 2001 licence. Also, it will now be mandatory for all mechanics to attend a TSSA safety seminar in early 2001, before being put at the controls of a ride this coming summer. These changes are part of TSSA's ongoing commitment to improve public safety at Ontario's fairs and amusement parks.

Mr Coburn: In June of this year, a coroner's jury issued recommendations to improve amusement ride safety in this province in the inquest that was investigating the death of Jerome Charron, where Mr Charron lost his life in a tragic accident on a bungee ride at the Central Canada Exhibition in Ottawa in 1998. I understand that these changes by the Technical Standards and Safety Authority are in direct response to some of the jury's recommendations. Can you please tell us how else the TSSA has responded to the jury's recommendations?

Hon Mr Runciman: As the member indicated, the coroner's jury came back with 29 recommendations for improvements to the operation of Ontario's amusement devices. I am pleased to say that the TSSA and the ministry have implemented or are in the process of implementing 28 of these 29 recommendations.

Today's announcement from the TSSA specifically addresses three of these recommendations surrounding the training and certification of ride operators and mechanics.

This government takes the safety of Ontarians very seriously. We will continue to work with the TSSA to ensure we have some of the highest safety standards in the world.

1550

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture,

Food and Rural Affairs. The legislative session is winding down and many of us will be heading back to our ridings with a lot of unanswered questions. First of all, there's a crisis in agriculture, whether you admit it or not. When can Ontario farmers expect the government to finally take a leadership role and provide some of the additional funding desperately needed by farmers? Also, on October 11, you stood in this Legislature and talked about a nutrient management plan. When can we expect to hear from you and what exactly is the status of this plan?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Thank you very much to the member opposite for the question. I want to assure him that the agriculture community in Ontario shares his concerns and shares society's concern for public health and the quality of our water. But I want to stress that the issue the member raises on nutrient management is indeed a very important but complex issue. I'm sure he would recognize that we want to get the process right. I want to stress that we've been working closely with the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on the issue. The issue has broad impacts on all Ontarians, so we want to make sure we consult with all of Ontario before we come forward with legislation. We are confident a solution can be reached if we spend sufficient time to make sure that we come up with a solution that protects our environment and ensures a sustainable agriculture industry.

Mr Cleary: Minister, you didn't exactly answer my question. I watched you and the former minister drain the heart right out of rural Ontario. First of all, you closed local agriculture offices, taking away front-line workers, and there are a lot of other issues. Then there's the role of the struggling farmers who are just asking for some help in this time of need and low prices, high gas prices and all that goes along with them. Now you're stalling on the management legislation. When are you going to start paying more attention than lip service to rural Ontario?

Hon Mr Hardeman: Indeed I thank the member opposite for the question, but I want to say that in fact we as a government are very concerned and very supportive of our agriculture community. Over the last several years, our budget has continued to increase to help our farmers, both in the services we are providing for the farmers and in the money we are putting into the safety nets to make sure that our Ontario farmers get the type of protection and the safety net they need.

The member will be aware that one of the commitments we made in the Blueprint was that we would go to the federal government and make sure we got our fair share for our Ontario farmers of federal safety net spending. In fact, we were very pleased that we were able to accomplish that. We got \$30 million more from the federal government that will go toward our Ontario farmers. We are matching that with another \$20 million to make sure that we can help our farmers through the time they find themselves in because of low commodity prices. I share his concern—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

AUTISM SERVICES

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Recently in my constituency office I met with parents of an autistic child. They wanted to know what supports are in place for this very vulnerable group of children. They specifically wanted to know what services will be provided and the criteria for eligibility for these services. Minister, could you please tell my constituents of the riding of Thornhill what the government is doing to provide services for autistic children?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Last year, before the pre-budget consultations, the Autism Society Ontario came forward and recommended that the government invest in providing services for young children with autism, particularly early intervention services so that we can deal with the challenges of young children with autism. At the time, not one single province in Canada was providing a comprehensive program to young children two to five years of age, but this government responded with funding of \$19 million to provide these early services.

Much like the Autism Society Ontario, Dr Fraser Mustard spoke about the malleability of a young child's brain. We can intervene at that early stage and provide supports, including an individualized service plan for each child, intensive behavioural intervention for children, particularly at the ages of two and five, and the evaluation for continuous improvement of these services. We're very pleased to have taken the time to build an infrastructure where none existed to train people and to begin to provide these important services to young children in Ontario.

Mrs Molinari: My constituents will be happy to hear that this government recognizes the need for early intervention and investing in the foundation we now have in place. In York region, there are centres that are acting as service providers for this very first program in Ontario. Minister, would you elaborate for my constituents if you have witnessed first-hand the delivery of services for autistic children and made sure that the money is in fact flowing to those who need it most?

Hon Mr Baird: We have taken the time to build a network around the province of Ontario to ensure these important services are available to children and their families. That is particularly the case in York region. I did have the opportunity just last month to visit Kinark child and family services to view two children receiving this therapy and to talk to their families and to hear their stories and to hear how, for many years, they couldn't have these services because they weren't provided. The good news is that they're beginning to get those services. I had the opportunity to meet with the executive director of Kinark, Peter Moore, and with the clinical director,

Sylvie Donais. They had to go to the States to get trained because those services weren't available. But we're now providing those services to children and their families right here in the province of Ontario.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. It has been a year since Dr McKendry released a report outlining recommendations to recruit and retain doctors in the province. One of those recommendations clearly emphasized the need to consider establishing a medical school in northern Ontario so that we can end the doctor shortages in our special part of the province.

Minister, instead of acting on that recommendation, you decided to appoint yet another panel to do yet another study when we already know what needs to be done. Many in northern Ontario have a concern about the panel because the chair and the vice-chair both represent southern Ontario medical schools. The concern is that the panel will recommend additional spaces in southern medical schools as the means to deal with the doctor problem.

More spaces in southern schools will not do anything to resolve the long-standing problem of attracting and retaining more doctors in northern Ontario. Minister, it has been a year since Dr McKendry reported. We still don't have the report from the expert panel. Will you now move forward on this very important recommendation and commit your government to establishing a medical school in northern Ontario?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member knows, it was during the tenure of her government that a decision was made to decrease the number of spaces in medical school, not only in this province, but throughout Canada. We have recognized that we do need an adequate supply and mix and distribution of physicians throughout Ontario, and that's why we had Dr McKendry do the initial analysis of the needs. We have—as you know and you referred to—given the information to Dr Peter George, and he has an expert panel. I can assure you the expert panel represents different areas of responsibility and different people from throughout the province. I think it would be premature to speculate as to what they may or may not do; in fact, it's probably quite unfair.

Ms Martel: The question was, will you commit on behalf of your government to establishing a medical school in northern Ontario? We ask that question because we know that the family residency program in Sudbury, for example, established under our government, has had enormous success in ensuring that those doctors who are trained in that community stay in northern Ontario. The same occurs in Thunder Bay at the residency program there.

We know that despite any of the initiatives that you have undertaken and despite the OMA-government agreement, nothing concrete has happened with respect

to recruitment and retention of physicians in northern Ontario—quite the opposite. At the Sudbury Regional Hospital in my community, we have an enormous crisis right now with respect to a loss of physicians. In the riding of my colleague from Timmins-James Bay, the hospital in Kapuskasing cannot operate the emergency ward because of a lack of physicians.

Dr McKendry made it clear. He recommended that a northern medical school should be established. Will your government follow the advice of your appointee and commit now to a northern medical school so that we can finally deal with the problem of doctor recruitment and doctor retention in our special part of the province?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again I would remind the member that it was your government that cut the spaces in medical schools. I would also remind you that since 1995 we have provided \$9 million to a joint OMA-OHA-Ministry of Health initiative to help over 60 small hospitals with physician coverage in emergency rooms.

There is also an agreement for 20 northern underserved communities to attract doctors. They are given a \$10,000 retention bonus if they stay for three years, double stipends for specialty services, guaranteed base salaries and \$60,000 for overhead costs. Also, we have provided a 70-hour sessional fee for physicians working nights, weekends and holidays in emergency departments in northern hospitals.

We've established community development officer programs with positions in northwestern and northeastern Ontario. We've designed a medical specialty course. We've established community-sponsored contracts. The list goes on and on.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Pursuant to standing order 30(b), I am now required to call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BALANCED BUDGETS FOR BRIGHTER FUTURES ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR DES BUDGETS ÉQUILIBRÉS POUR UN AVENIR MEILLEUR

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 18, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 152, An Act to implement the 2000 Budget to establish a made-in-Ontario tax system and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 2000 en vue de créer un régime fiscal propre à l'Ontario et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I am now required to put the question.

Mr Young has moved second reading of Bill 152. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1604 to 1609.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be acknowledged by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Palladini, Al
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan	Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be acknowledged by the Clerk.

Nays

Bountrogianni, Marie	Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario
Boyer, Claudette	Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley
Bradley, James J.	Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie
Caplan, David	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Cleary, John C.	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Conway, Sean G.	Lankin, Frances	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 20.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

BALANCED BUDGETS FOR BRIGHTER FUTURES ACT, 2000 LOI DE 2000 SUR DES BUDGETS ÉQUILIBRÉS POUR UN AVENIR MEILLEUR

Mr Eves moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act to implement the 2000 Budget to establish a made-in-Ontario tax system and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 2000 en vue de créer un régime fiscal propre à l'Ontario et à modifier diverses lois.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The short title of the act is Balanced Budgets for Brighter Futures Act, 2000. The act provides the legislative framework for a made-in-Ontario, made-for-Ontario personal income taxation system, a system that

would allow the Ontario government to make changes to Ontario's tax system to target specific tax credits, exemptions and deductions specifically so that they benefit the Ontario taxpayer directly and ensure that our economy continues to grow and to prosper.

A made-in-Ontario tax system would encourage young professionals to stay here and work in Ontario through innovative tax credits, such as the Ontario research employee stock credit option. With this credit, eligible research employees would not pay Ontario tax on the first \$100,000 they make each year in taxable employment benefits and capital gains. This would greatly improve Ontario's competitiveness in the new economy and do much to stem the so-called brain drain to the United States of America of individuals in the fields of information technology and computer engineering.

I think it is important to note that it is our government that first introduced cuts to capital gains tax and challenged the federal government to follow our lead. I am pleased to say they have done that. I would like to point out that it took the federal government almost a year and an election campaign to see the light, but they have done the right thing. As you know, we have now made the reduction of the capital gains inclusion rate to 50% retroactive to October 18 of this year, to ensure that all Ontarians can access this benefit ahead of schedule.

I would like to urge the federal government to work with us on the program for research employees, in the same way they were able to come to the table on the issue of capital gains. To date, they have not responded to our challenge to match this program, nor have they agreed, unfortunately, to administer it at a reasonable cost to the taxpayers of Ontario.

If the federal government remains unwilling to act in the taxpayers' best interest here in Ontario, we'll have no choice but to establish the capacity to provide this benefit directly ourselves.

Investment in R&D-intensive businesses is vital to Ontario's competitiveness in the global marketplace. This legislation would allow the government to increase the tax credit for research-oriented labour-sponsored investment funds from 15% to 20%, providing more venture capital to research companies. The bill also supports the mining industry of northern Ontario by providing a 10-year, or \$10-million, mining tax exemption for eligible remote mines.

The government will also be supporting the mining sector through a new focused flow-through shares tax credit. This credit will bring much-needed investment to this very important industry in the province, all the more so now that the federal government has finally accepted our challenge and offer by proposing a flow-through tax credit of its own as well. Amendments to implement this measure will be proposed in the spring.

Our critics have from time to time suggested that our government has ignored the needs and concerns of Ontario's cultural and artistic communities. At this time, I'd like to remind those critics of some of the tax incentives we have provided in this bill to support the arts

and cultural communities; tax incentives that support the book publishing, digital media, film and television industries in Ontario. The estimated value of these credits is about \$94 million a year.

The new educational technology tax incentive would encourage businesses to support Ontario's universities and community colleges in acquiring new teaching equipment and learning technologies. Ontario's business community is increasingly recognizing the stake it has in our province's educational system. The educational technology tax incentive will mean our students will have greater access to new, up-to-date technology and equipment in the classroom.

This bill would extend the right to incorporate professionals regulated under public acts, while maintaining personal professional liability to protect the public interest. The bill will further eliminate red tape for small businesses and other professionals by enabling them to take advantage of the short form corporations tax return.

The bill would allow Ontario to establish its own separate tax rates and brackets to restore full indexation of Ontario's personal income tax system, thereby eliminating bracket creep and ensuring that no Ontario taxpayer pays more than his or her fair share.

We firmly believe that tax cuts and reductions like these are key to our continued economic growth and job creation in Ontario. They encourage business investment and generate the revenue we need for priority areas such as health care and education.

During second reading of this bill, some in the opposition spoke of a possible recession and downturn in the province's economy. They painted a picture of doom and gloom; quite the opposite, I might add, of what federal Finance Minister Paul Martin is saying in today's newspapers. I would like to set the record straight. What we have in Ontario today is a thriving economy: an employment growth rate of 15.5%, with 184,000 new jobs created this year alone. Ontario's GDP rose 6.1% last year and is predicted to grow by 5.5% this year, and private sector forecasts are averaging out at 3.7% next year.

Our government remains committed to our balanced budget plan and to protecting the gains we have made on behalf of the people of Ontario over the course of our mandate. The Balanced Budgets for Brighter Futures Act will ensure that we stay the course.

1620

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to follow the finance minister and say how much we appreciate his description of the bill.

I wanted to spend the few moments I have commenting on the issue of the quality of life here in Ontario. I think all of us appreciate that it's not measured by the bottom line. It is measured by the quality of life in its broadest sense: our health care system; the environment; the education system; how we treat and deal with those most in need in our society; how we ensure that everyone has adequate housing; how, to the best of our ability, we make certain we have the resources to fund those things;

and that we have an economy where there are jobs for all those who want them.

I would say to all of us, as we take stock at the year-end and look at this balanced budget legislation, we need to ask ourselves this question: is the quality of life in Ontario better now than it was five years ago?

If we start with the issue of health care—and that's probably the cornerstone for all of us—does anyone in this province believe our health care system is better today than it was five years ago? I don't think so. I repeat, I think Premier Harris made a fundamental mistake within the first few months of getting elected by cutting significant funding for hospitals. They were forced to lay off nurses. I remember the Premier saying, "Well, they're like Hula Hoop workers. Their day has come and gone." Most knew that was ludicrous, and now we're desperate to find nurses.

Does anyone here in Ontario believe that particularly our secondary schools are not in more turmoil now than we've ever seen them? There are some young people who will go through their entire secondary school education without any extracurricular activities.

Does anyone believe that our environment is in better shape than it was five years ago? I urge the public, if they are tired of opposition rhetoric, to get out the Provincial Auditor's report. He's the independent person, with a staff, who looks at the quality of the spending of our money in Ontario. He says the government cut 25% of the staff that used to do the inspections on the environment, and now we've got significant problems. He points that out in some considerable detail.

Does anyone now believe that we're not headed for a period of instability in our workplace? We've been blessed in this province to have a very solid relationship between our employees and employers. Again, don't take my word for it. The government publishes a book to attract business to Ontario. They said, among other things, "The labour-management legal framework is streamlined and balanced. Labour-management relations are constructive and stable. Bargaining is rooted in realism and a clear understanding of the competitive nature of the global economy." What we did just literally an hour ago was that the government forced through two labour relations bills that will do an enormous amount to unsettle that balance.

On the housing front, those who look at this will tell us we are building the foundation of a crisis in housing. My colleague Mr Caplan, who is our critic in housing, has done a terrific job of articulating the problem we're going to face in the years ahead and, frankly, solutions for the government that they've ignored.

Even on the economic front—and I know there's a debate about who's responsible for the growth in the Ontario economy—I would say there is not one economist you can find in Ontario who will not tell us that the most important factor in the growth in the Ontario economy has been exports. You cannot find an economist who will not tell us that.

I take my hat off to our Ontario industry, our employers and our employees. We've proven that we can compete aggressively and successfully in the US. Ten years ago, exports were equivalent to 29% of Ontario's gross domestic product. According to the economic statement released just a few weeks ago, it's now up to 55%, in 10 years.

We are now very close to producing as many cars and trucks in Ontario as Michigan. We have Ontario plants, and the management and, importantly, the employees in those plants have been recognized throughout North America for their efficiency. The auto industry loves to locate in Ontario, and we've got to keep it that way.

But I just say to all of us, as we look now at the quality of life in Ontario, let's take stock after five years.

Health care system: by all accounts, worse. Education: in more turmoil now than it has been in my memory, particularly in our secondary schools. Environment: it is not just Walkerton. The auditor pointed out that throughout Ontario the number of inspections has dropped, the safety in our water plants throughout Ontario dropped, the number of serious problems increased. Housing: we are clearly sowing the seeds of a significant housing crisis. There's labour relations.

An area I think we all will be judged on is how well we have we have treated those in our society who face the biggest problems, often called our most vulnerable. Let's cast our minds back. Five years ago, the benefits of people on social assistance were cut by 21%. Remember, well over half of the people in the province of Ontario on social assistance are children. The benefits were cut by 21%. A parent with two children on social assistance is living on about \$15,000 a year of support.

We will break for our Christmas. Dare I say, tragically, that we will break until, it looks like, the end of March.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: "Shame," the member for St Catharines said. I agree with him. We will go to our cozy cottages, our condos in Florida. There are members in the Legislature who spend \$15,000 a year on vacations. They spend more on vacations than a single parent with two children gets. I think to our shame we will leave here without giving a single cent of help to those children who are on social assistance. Premier Harris just a few weeks ago was saying, "I deserve a 42% increase," and yet those young people on social assistance will get nothing. They've had a 21% cut and nothing over five years.

As the government proudly pats itself on the back for what, in our judgment, is an economy that has had significant good growth—but I repeat that an economist will tell us the most important reason has been the export business. At the same time, what about the other things that we want to measure the quality of life by in Ontario? Health care, education, the environment, housing, labour relations management, how we are dealing with our most vulnerable—even on the issue of community safety, there are fewer police officers now in the province of Ontario than when Mike Harris became Premier. Not many

people realize that but there are fewer police officers now in Ontario than when Mike Harris became Premier.

As we will be dealing with the balanced budget bill, final reading, by 6 o'clock tonight, I'd ask all of us to step back from it and ask, have we really, on balance, achieved in Ontario what we could have, recognizing that this has been a golden opportunity where governments in other jurisdictions have taken advantage of this opportunity to get their fiscal house in order?

I keep reminding us that Premier Harris has added \$24 billion of debt to the province of Ontario. Between now, 4:30, and 6 o'clock, when we vote on the bill, Ontario will spend \$300,000 just to pay the interest costs for the increased debt by Premier Harris.

On all those counts, I say that the budget is not balanced for the people of Ontario.

1630

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I certainly am pleased that I have an opportunity to speak on third reading of this very important piece of legislation, An Act to implement the 2000 Budget to establish a made-in-Ontario tax system and to amend various Acts. As we have discussed in this assembly over the past short while, this legislation wasn't drafted overnight. It's the culmination of a rather lengthy and extensive public consultation that commenced approximately 11 months ago, consultation that included Minister Eves meeting with numerous individuals, meeting with numerous organizations across the province, talking to them about what the priorities should be in this province for the future, priorities that would do the utmost to assure the people of this province that the continued prosperity that we have experienced over the last five and a half years would indeed be prolonged.

Some 370 organizations and individuals were contacted directly by the ministry's office, 220 organizations prepared material and approximately 300 participated in that process. They came from all parts of this province. They came from labour and from management. They came from small-town Ontario and large urban centres. They were individuals who simply had constructive ideas that they wished to present to the province of Ontario and they were large organizations that had something they wished to share. Each of their submissions, I should say to you, was indeed considered.

When I had the privilege of joining the Ministry of Finance as the parliamentary assistant in March of this year, I had an opportunity to become involved in the budget process. I can tell you that I was surprised at how much time and effort was taken in that very busy ministry to consider the submissions made by these various interests—individuals and organizations; how much time was taken to analyze the costs of their various suggestions; and how much time was taken to consider what the results would be, positive and negative. Financial growth and cost were all factored in before those ideas were included in the budget document, or excluded, or taken in some small measure. The results of those

hundreds of hours of consultations have made their way into this budget document.

I should say to you as well that the standing committee on finance also spent a great deal of time, and that of course is an all-party committee that toured the province and made itself accessible to Ontarians by travelling to six different cities across Ontario that included Timmins, Kenora and Chatham. Consultations were held throughout the winter, particularly in February, and 102 organizations made submissions. These again included unions, social advocacy groups, individuals, community organizations and businesses. Forty-four written submissions were also received as part of that process. They too were factored into the budget document that was tabled in this Legislature in May of this year and that forms part of the plan for the continued prosperity of this province.

Warren G. Bennis once said that leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality, and our government, in my respectful submission, has provided the kind of strong leadership that was necessary to come forward with the Common Sense Revolution, as we did leading up to the 1995 election, strong leadership that made those promises contained in that policy document a reality. We did that yet again in 1999 with our policy document that was entitled Blueprint—a blueprint for the future of this province. Most of the provisions contained within the budget legislation fit within the philosophy, the policies espoused and set out in the Blueprint document. So we went to the people of this province in 1999. We said we had some further ideas to continue the growth, to continue the prosperity, to ensure that we continued to have jobs created within this province, and of course we have. We have had 830,000 net new jobs in the last five and a half years.

Mr Speaker, I would invite you and others watching to compare that to what happened in this province in the years preceding our assumption of office. You will find that before we took office, for a variety of reasons, there was a decrease in the number of people working in this province and an increase in the number of people receiving social assistance. Things have changed, changed to the point where we have almost a million more people working and we have in excess of 500,000 fewer people trapped in the cycle of dependency that we euphemistically called welfare.

It's thanks to these extraordinary efforts, to the numerous tax cuts that were implemented, that Ontario enters this new century, the new millennium, strong and ready to meet the challenges of a global marketplace.

However, there are still naysayers. In fact, we've heard from some of them this afternoon—Liberals—and undoubtedly we'll hear from New Democrats later. There are still naysayers who refuse to give any credit to the people of Ontario. They believe the remarkable turnaround in this province is simply a result of activities that have taken place south of the border. The Liberals and New Democrats take every opportunity they can find to repeat that very negative approach.

I will tell you now, and I say it sincerely, that I have faith and respect in the abilities of the people of this province. Our government knows that any government cannot depend upon other jurisdictions for continued economic growth, that what is needed is a made-in-Ontario solution, and that is what we implemented, a solution that would ensure a better future for our children.

The other day I invited the opposition members—the Liberals and New Democrats—and I will again today, to go to the plants like the one in Mr Dunlop's riding in Simcoe North, where thousands of men and women wake up each and every day and build automobiles. If the Liberals and New Democrats feel so strongly, go to those plants and say to the workers, "No, it's not because of your hard work that Ontario is succeeding and that the fortunes of this province have turned around." If the Liberals and New Democrats feel so strongly about that, why don't they go tell those hard-working individuals in Alliston or Windsor or Oshawa, or those in the high-tech field in Ottawa or Kitchener or Markham, go explain to them that really it has nothing to do with them, that it's because of some eventuality, some decision made south of the border? I suspect they won't take me up on that invitation. I suspect they won't travel to those plants and say to those workers what they say with great regularity within this assembly. I suspect they won't go and tell those workers that the economic recovery of this province has nothing to do with them.

Of course it has everything to do with them and it has everything to do with things that are going on in this province. That's why we have a growth rate within this province that is far greater than that of any other province. That's why we have a net GDP economic growth rate in this province that is greater than that of the United States. That's why we have economic growth within this province that is greater than any of the other G7 countries. It's not just about the economic recovery in the United States. Undoubtedly that has had some influence upon the events in this province, there's no doubt about that, but it is insulting to the people of this province to attribute each and every positive piece of news to results and decisions made south of the border, and it's also inaccurate.

1640

Let's talk about why it's inaccurate. Net exports, which are exports minus imports, have accounted for less than 20% of our GDP growth over the last five years. By far the largest source of growth has been consumer spending, boosted by tax cuts. The Conservatives of Mike Harris's government have always advocated that if you return money to the hard-working people of this province they will spend it wisely and they will continue to stimulate the economy.

Housing expenditures and business investment have also been very strong over the past five and a half years, and these have undoubtedly also been influenced by the tax cuts. People have more money to spend and they have more confidence. As well, from September 1995 to October 2000, Ontario's total employment grew by

15.5%. I'd invite you to compare that to the growth rate in the rest of this country. In the rest of this country the growth rate was 9.7%, but in Ontario employment growth was 15.5%. Ontario's employment growth has been much higher not only than that of other provinces, but higher than neighbouring states.

Again I invite you to capture the words of the Liberal members in particular, who are quick to say that we're simply riding on the coattails of the Americans' wealth. Perhaps in their comments later this afternoon they can explain why it is that the state of Michigan, as an example, has had, over the same period of time, an employment growth rate of 7.4%. Ontario's is 15.5%, roughly twice as much. In their explanation I'm sure they will undoubtedly touch upon why Ohio has had an employment growth rate over the same period of time of 6.7%, as compared to the Ontario growth rate of 15.5%.

There is something going on in this province, and what's going on here is a combination of the hard work of the people of this province, combined with a government, the Mike Harris government, that believes in the residents, that believes in the workers, that believes that if you give them more responsibility, if you return more money to them, if you tax them less, they will make responsible decisions and continue to stimulate the economy. That's why this budget legislation includes various provisions that continue that tax-cutting strategy.

It also talks in this legislation, if passed by this assembly, about capital gains reduction. I certainly applaud the federal government for coming to the table—better late than never—and for accepting the challenge that Minister Eves laid out in May of this year to reduce the capital gains inclusion rate. We believe this will strengthen the economy both in this province and in this country. It will encourage businesses and individuals to invest, to take risks, to make the economy even stronger. It will create jobs, and ultimately the result of that will be that it will improve the standard of living in this country and in this province.

One example of a country that has adopted a philosophy that very much embraces the belief that lower capital gains will result in more prosperity is the Netherlands, a country, I might add, that has a rather elaborate and admired social safety net. So one need not abandon the social infrastructure simply because you believe in cutting taxes. That in fact is exactly where this party is. The Conservative Party of this province believes just that, that you don't have to be a socialist to have a social conscience, as Minister Eves has said on many occasions.

During the break that we're about to commence, I'd invite you to consider the experience of the Netherlands. You will find, as did Bruce Little of the *Globe and Mail* in a recent article, that they have experienced phenomenal growth—business growth, job growth, growth in their economy—as a result of a number of measures that they have implemented. Perhaps the most striking of those measures is the fact that they have no capital gains. The Netherlands exempts all capital gains from taxes. They are indeed an interesting model for us to consider.

The good news here is that we are reducing the overall tax burden in this province and making smart choices in the taxes we are cutting. We're cutting personal income taxes to boost consumer spending and savings, we are cutting corporate taxes to encourage investment and job creation, and as I indicated a moment ago, we're cutting capital gains taxes to encourage investment in Ontario businesses and promote further economic growth across this province.

The members of this House, I think, all come to work each and every day with similar intentions. We do indeed, regardless of our political affiliation, want the best for the people of this province, but the members on this side of the House are very proud of the record, proud of the efforts Ontarians have made across this province and are very optimistic about the future.

We have a rather unlikely individual who has joined our ranks and has commenced bragging about this wonderful province of Ontario. A Canadian leader who was previously well known as a critic of the Mike Harris tax-cut approach to government has recently come forward and acknowledged the level of success that has been achieved in this province. In fact, this Canadian leader, whose name I'll reveal in a moment, has come forward of late and has said publicly in the United States that Ontario is now very competitive with the Americans, and I quote from a recent article where this Canadian leader was quoted as saying, "Our tax system is now very competitive with the Americans. If you look at Ontario, the income tax in Ontario, provincial and federal together, is competitive with New York, and Michigan, California and the state of Washington." This individual, this Canadian leader whose name I'll reveal in a moment, goes on to say, "Corporate tax, too. But the payroll tax in Canada is much lower than in the US."

I know members opposite are anxious to know who it is who has this insight, albeit an insight that was come by rather late in the game, who it is who has come forward and said these wonderful things about Ontario and how competitive it is. Of course, Mr Speaker, you know that was our Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, who recently spoke to an audience at a university in the United States and bragged about just how competitive Ontario is and what a great place it is for businesses to establish themselves and to grow.

It's becoming more and more clear that our standard of living is inextricably linked to our ability to innovate and create. Ontario's success in the 21st century will depend on its ability to think unconventionally and create and generate new ideas that will translate into new technologies. That is why, as you go through this budget bill, you will see numerous initiatives that will encourage the expansion of a number of high-tech industries. It will make Ontario an even more desirable location for mining companies to come to and take some risks.

It is because of that, because of initiatives like those, that I'm very proud to be supporting this legislation. It is because of prudent business decisions that in many instances were implemented in spite of the fact that many

economists suggested they wouldn't result in a positive outcome. Many of the Liberal and New Democratic members suggested it was voodoo economics, that this trickle-down theory simply couldn't work. They said that in 1995 when they campaigned, and they said it again in 1999 when they campaigned, and we have proven them wrong.

We have more people working. We have \$14 billion more coming into this province's coffers each and every year, \$14 billion more collected in taxes in spite of 166-plus tax cuts. We've proven them wrong in that regard, and I'm very proud of that. I'm not proud because I take any particular delight in saying they were wrong and we were right, even though that may well be the case. I'm not proud of that. What I'm pleased about is the fact that we have \$14 billion more coming into this province each and every year. People are paying less taxes, but overall more people are working, so we have more money coming in. We can invest in priority services, in health care and education, as we are doing. We're spending more than we ever did before. We can do that because we have the money now, because we've had two back-to-back balanced budgets and because we now have a province where, instead of the residents therein talking about some sort of economic depression, which was the term that was talked about, and bankruptcy, which was a phrase that was used in 1995, there is hope, there is confidence. I have hope and I have confidence that this budget will encourage the continuation of the prosperity that we have experienced over the last five years.

1650

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): In the 10 minutes that I have on Bill 152, balanced budgets for brighter futures, which I feel needs some comment—but before I do that, I just wanted to follow up on something my colleague who just completed his speech talked about. If we all come here to make a difference, we may disagree. Yesterday we saw a demonstration, the frustration of one of our colleagues in this House, although not in my party, whom I respect very much. His frustration was in order to advocate on behalf of the poor in our province. He saw the frustration of the breakdown of democracy, the breakdown of one being able to debate and to bring concerns to this Parliament due to the enormous number of closures; it was 63. We've broken all records here, tripled all the previous records that we have had here in the closure of debates in this House, frustrating members from bringing concerns to this government about the situation of the poor in our province. I just want to say to the member from Sault Ste Marie that I wholeheartedly support his move to highlight the facts of what happened here.

Following up on that, this is my fifth time as a member here, and I would say that one of the most despicable behaviours that I've seen of any minister—I have come to respect many ministers here from all three parties. I have seen a demonstration of a behaviour here by a minister who should be advocating on behalf of the poor. I speak of no other than the Minister of Community

and Social Services, who should be advocating on behalf of the poor to make sure that the wealth we have, this enormous wealth that this Conservative Mike Harris government talks about, is being distributed to help the most vulnerable in our society. We would say that he should be advocating on behalf of those individuals. What he has done is depict them—all people—those who are poor or those who are on welfare, as those who continuously are dependent on drugs. In his backdrop, while putting forward programs, were syringes; it is one of the most disgusting things I've ever seen here. I think all ministers here must conduct themselves in a manner that one can have respect for. I don't have to agree with his policies and all that, but I hope that in the shuffle of the cabinet the Premier will see through him, that this individual could never advocate on behalf of the poor in our society.

So we talk about this great success that we have here, the success of this government that has brought so much wealth to this province in the time they've been here. They talk of success, that they have \$1 billion worth of surpluses, but they never talk about the \$120-odd billion of debt that they have added to this province. A brighter future? Where is that brighter future?

They talk about the success of a balanced budget. Is it balanced for students who are paying far more for their tuition fees? It's harder to access affordable education with the increase of student fees that we have here.

We talk about a balanced budget and success when we have cancelled rent control in this province. It is much more difficult to rent on the income which one is receiving. We talk about the success of a government which has reduced welfare recipients' income by 22%. Then, with the inflation aspect of things, it goes up, they have to try to rent at a higher fee, pay more tuition fees, pay for more daycare, and they say that we have done so well and we have a \$1-billion surplus. Where did that money come from? It came from the poor, on the backs of the poor. Today it is harder felt by them, and the government members brag about what wealth we have.

They don't talk about the increased homelessness that we have seen in this province. It's a disgrace. It's almost a national disgrace, what's happening here. We're talking about a 15% increase in jobs when we have an increase in homelessness. They've said at least seven people may have died each week. Inside this place, we don't hear about the cost of no place to sleep, no warmth. This is the government that talks about the great success we have.

We talk about the success of a balanced budget and the surplus we have. We're asking the labour force to work longer hours, 60 hours, breaking down family cohesiveness. People are away from their homes maybe 12 to 14 hours a day and breaking up the family, and they're working for less. We're putting the power in the hands of the big corporations, who can dictate how long we should work, and for less. That's the success we talk about. I'm appalled.

I'm very much appalled that the government could stand here and say that we have this wonderful surplus, when it's all the success of what we have done for people

in the motor car industry and what have you. We talk about the success of individuals, and he talks of individuals today, but single parents are having it so difficult. When they come, they don't have any access to speak to their ministers to put their concerns. We talk about success, when the schools are in chaos, when the health care system is in chaos. Children are being born in emergencies regularly—no beds. They said that's the success we have because we have a surplus.

We talk about success because we cut back on most of the money. We talk about success because we can give \$200 to people and say: "Here is your refund. Isn't it wonderful that we have given you \$200 from your taxes for fun?" What we have done is put more user fees all over. If you total the user fees over a year, I'm sure they're paying \$2,000 or \$3,000 more out of their pockets. The government said, "Here is \$200, but you had better pay \$2,000 or \$3,000 more for user fees," for other things that governments were providing.

Who are you balancing this budget on? Where is this brighter future? Who is laughing and who is smiling? Who is happy? It's happy for the corporations you have talked about, that will get a greater tax break on the backs of the poor. That is not, to me, a successful, brighter future. That's not what it is. As a matter of fact, the irony of it all is that we are going to pass this bill on the eve of Christmas, when we have deprived and denied thousands of people within our province not only of Christmas—Christmas is just a season—but almost their life. Long after Christmas, in March and April and May, there will still be no affordable housing. There is far less money in the pockets of the poor. Then they say we have a brighter future.

I would like us to feel that at Christmas the ministers and the Premier should be generous. I don't want governments to be generous. They're not being generous one bit, because all the money they have collected, regardless of what party we are, what government they are, is from taxes that people have earned already and passed back to government to be redistributed in a fair and equitable way. It's not to be abusive and offensive, like some of the ministers we have seen here, especially the Minister of Community and Social Services, who should be advocating on behalf of the poor and the most vulnerable in our society—not one bit. Is that a brighter future? Is that a successful government? I say it's a government that has failed the people of Ontario, failed the real people who asked them to represent them on their behalf.

It's a sad day when we have to say at Christmastime, "I can be Santa Claus," as the Premier said. I don't want him to be Santa Claus; I want him to advocate on behalf of all the people of this province who need the support of this government. That is why today my party and Dalton McGuinty will never support this bill.

1700

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's a pleasure to speak to this bill. But before I do, I want to introduce two young people who are here in the audience watching the proceedings and listening to the debates:

Maria Lopes and Sonia Fernandes, who are keenly interested in listening to the debates of the various members, and particularly interested in what the Tories have to say about anything, if anything, although you do have a lot to say, which is usually nothing about something. But they're interested. They're keen and they want to learn. God bless, because without these young people and their interest, where would we be—unlike Mr Young, the member from Willowdale, who in his speech the other day said, "It's clear that we, the government, and you, the opposition, have two different styles of consulting."

He said they could consult ad nauseam, as the other parties would like and have done, or they could simply act, as they are doing. The time, he said, is to act because consulting people and talking the issue to death and debating it, going back and forth, in the end would produce so very little. In his view, I guess he would dispense with consultations because it's so wasteful and so tiring and, I assume, so repetitive that it would serve no purpose whatsoever, and would therefore take the shortcut, do what's right, presumably, according to the world view of the Conservative government, and implement it as quickly as they possibly can.

Given that Mr Harris, the Premier, is so godlike, good heavens, why would you want to consult? Because of the fountain of knowledge that is in that mind of the Premier and presumably the other members, if there is such knowledge, we don't need to consult with the public any longer. Therefore, in my view, if that's the case, we don't need democracy any more. Not only do we not need it, but a dictatorial approach to doing things would be presumably what these people are recommending, because—

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): You don't want to get rid of democracy, do you?

Mr Marchese: Minister of Agriculture, follow the argument. If you guys say we don't need to consult—

Hon Mr Hardeman: But we do.

Mr Marchese: Oh, do you? Then how would you, Minister of Agriculture, explain yourself? I'm happy you're here, by the way. No, no, I'm going to help you out, because I've got the floor and you don't.

Here's the problem: I say you guys don't consult and then you say, jokingly of course, or seriously, "Of course we do. We believe in consultation." What is the nature of this consultation if you do two things: one, limit the debate on every bill in this House, where some bills get an—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Minister of Agriculture, you can't do that, because it's a fact, right? You can't shake your head negatively. It's a fact.

So your bills get an afternoon of debate. If, by the grace of God, we are lucky, we get two days to hear deputants, and the second day we hear more deputants and then do clause-by-clause. If we are extremely lucky, Speaker—you would know because you're in committee—we might get three days. This because of the

benevolence of Mr Harris and the others who deem that perhaps three days might be necessary, although in the mind of the member from Willowdale it perhaps stretches the consultation just a bit too much. But that's about all we get, three days maximum: two days of debate in committee after a bill has been passed in this House as a general rule, but mostly we get one day or, of late, no debate whatsoever, where the government again deems that we don't have to discuss. That's the extent, Minister of Agriculture, of the consultation that you are engaged in with the public.

How do you hold yourself accountable? I presume the minister says, "The way we hold ourselves accountable is during an election." That might be a fair comment if the taxpayers say that all you want is to be consulted once every four or four and a half years. If so, this is your government, because it's exactly what they're doing. If, on the other hand, you, as taxpayers and citizens, believe that you should be consulted a little more regularly in between elections and you might find it reasonable that bills should be taken out—and not just for consultation with a couple of people in Toronto, but that these bills should be taken out for debate across Ontario—then this is not your government. We no longer have, therefore, a democratic government that consults and makes itself accountable. We have, in effect, a dictatorial *modus operandi* government. That's what you have, taxpayers. If that's the world view to which you subscribe, then you've got your party.

But if you're looking for greater accountability of governments to you—the public, the people, the citizens, the taxpayers—what you must demand of your Conservative members is that when they introduce a bill, it be aired fully so that most of you across Ontario have an opportunity to debate bills and have an opportunity to read bills. That, I've got to tell you, takes a long time, and not even your own Conservative members read them. If they don't have the time to read them, surely you have less time, therefore requiring you to have the time that is necessary to get hold of the documents, read them, and then consult.

That's the difference between people like me, Marchese from Trinity-Spadina, and people like the member from Willowdale, who quite appropriately says we've got two different styles. He's right. New Democrats want to consult because we believe we need to hold ourselves accountable, and the member from Willowdale is saying, "No, we can't do that. That's too much. It's too much ad nauseam discussion and it probably leads to nowhere in the end anyway, so we'll take the shortcut and implement as quickly as we can." Those are the two styles. I admit that's the case.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Yes, but the trains won't run on time.

Mr Marchese: You're quite right about how, yes, the trains don't run on time. With this government, the trains do run on time, and yes, it's possible that with New Democrats it might slow itself down a little bit. But if you're looking for the greater good and if you're looking

for greater accountability of individual politicians and governments, then it might take a little time, and yes, it's cumbersome. It is an encumbrance indeed. It's a burden that I think taxpayers want to live with. I believe that sincerely. I believe that is the foundation of citizenry. A civic society is based on those very elements that, in my view, are critical, and without them what you've got is Mike Harris and the gang, the dictatorial bunch who are going to let you know what is good for you because you elected them twice, and as far as they are concerned they have a mandate to deliver whatever it is they promised, and that's it. That's the extent of the consultation.

Enough on that. There is so much more to say.

When it comes to the economy, Speaker, your colleagues on the right-hand side of you have said, "We have the magical solution to our economic woes. We know what it is." Do you know what it is? They said, "It's tax cuts."

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Even the feds agree.

Mr Marchese: Even the feds agree with you. I know. You are in cahoots, as it were, with each other. You are in collusion with each other. I understand. That's why we have often criticized you as the Bobbsey Twins of Canadian politics. But my attack is on the Conservatives at the moment, not the Liberals, because at the moment we're friends—for now. My immediate attack is on you Tories.

The magical solution to our economic woes, they said, is tax cuts. They say, without any corresponding evidence, that it has created 850,000 jobs in this province by that mere magical tool called tax cuts.

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Boy, are you guys good. You guys have a real gift—you know that?—that you can so divinely understand the economy and how it works. You said, "Ha, we got it. If we give tax cuts to the very wealthy, they will produce 850,000 jobs, and growing. How divine you are. You guys are good. You have a gift. It's special. Here's my problemo—

Interjection: Your problemo.

Mr Marchese: My problemo, yes.

The economy is slowing down in the US. Mr Ernie Eves, the finance minister of Ontario, and M. Martin federally from Ottawa, say, "Not to worry." Harris says, and Eves, the Minister of Finance, "It's a recession-proof economic tool that we have adopted, and don't you worry, our prosperity will continue forever because it's recession-proof."

Behold, if it is recession-proof it means it is almost seamless. You can't puncture a hole in this economic boom of yours if it's recession-proof. Isn't that correct, Brad? Brad, follow with me, disagree with me.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): You're going to elect the NDP again? That'll do it.

Mr Marchese: No, nothing to do with electing the NDP or not. I'm just trying to deal with an argument that you've made. Recession-proof means we are not going to have a recession in this Ontario of ours even if that

elephant across the border is having a hard economic time. We only pray it will be a soft landing, not a hard landing. But in spite of it, whether it's a soft landing or a hard landing, M. Eves says, "Don't worry." M. Martin, who also speaks French and can do this in two languages, says, "Ne te préoccupe pas." In both languages we are saved and spared by the magic of tax cuts.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): Be happy, don't worry.

Mr Marchese: Brad, my friend, you are in deep, deep doo-doo, I can tell you, deep, deep economic doo-doo in the next little while.

Here's the thing, Speaker, through you to the taxpayers: if the taxpayers in the next little while do not spend this wealth the government has passed on—they say to the most marginal of people, that they are the ones who got the bulk of the tax cuts; that's what they say—if these low-income people who got the bulk of the tax cuts don't spend while the economy in the US is interminably going down, we are going to be in trouble, in deep economic doo-doo. Only if those people who have been the beneficiaries of your largesse spend will the economy in Ontario and Canada possibly be spared, possibly for a year, possibly two. Depending on how the economic boom of the US sort of diminishes ever so gently or ever so hard, whichever way, I suggest to you, Brad Clark from Stoney Creek, that you guys are in trouble, because it'll be smeared all over your faces.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Yes, that's a visual attack, I know. It's a visual assault, you're quite right. I shouldn't have said it. But if you appreciate the image, as concrete as it is, I give it, I offer it in kindness.

Imagine, you are the people who, when New Democrats said, "We used to spend the money to keep the economy flowing," said, "Oh, no, that was bad." Joe Spina from Brampton says, "We are spending more through SuperBuild on capital projects than any other government before"—I read the Hansard the other day—"more capital money than any other government before." So while they attack us, Joe Spina from Brampton says no, that's not true, that they are outspending us on capital expenditures, outspending the New Democrats. When I say we spend, they laugh. The Tories laugh, "These crazy New Democrats spending." Now presumably, according to Joe Spina, the member for Brampton, you guys are spending more than us.

What gives? Are you contradicting yourself a tad? Yes or no? If you're not, somebody is fudging. I suggest to you, Speaker, and I suggest to the member for Brampton, that you guys are not spending enough on capital—Minister, welcome. You guys are not spending enough on capital expenditures, and if the taxpayers of Ontario don't spend in the next six months to a year, that so-called recession-proof economy of yours that you have built so magically with your divinity of tax cuts is all going to crumble down to the floor.

It will all be for naught and you'll have to start at the beginning. Not only that, but the \$10 billion, \$11 billion

that you have just frittered away, borrowed, to give away for tax cuts, will be gone forever. It will not come back any more because Brad Clark, the member for Stoney Creek, will not tax the corporations again in a recession, not that you'd want to anyway because you're such good buddies, yourselves and those big corporations. You wouldn't do that under any circumstances. Imagine, taxing the corporate sector in a bad economy? They wouldn't dream of that. OK, fine, you don't tax in a bad economy and you won't tax, certainly, the good taxpayers whom you've spared from the worst and you're not going to ask them for money to help you out in a recession, right? We've got balanced budgets on the books, which means they cannot go into a deficit.

Speaker, are you picturing the disaster that will pursue us, that will ensue as a result of these dumb economic strategies? Balanced budgets and no deficits allowed. A recession hits because the US is going down and Canada will be dragged down with it, in spite of the protestations from the Conservative government that it's a recession-proof economy. Imagine: balanced budgets, the economy going down the tubes, no money. They don't tax the corporate sector, they don't tax the taxpayers, and what do we have? Brad, help me. What do we have?

Mr Clark: You've lost me.

Mr Marchese: Of course I've lost you, because the logic escapes you. It escaped you then and it escapes you now. To deal with a recession, Brad Clark from Stoney Creek, where you have—

Mr Clark: Can't you be more positive?

Mr Marchese: I am very positive, but I'm just telling you, taxpayers, what I believe will happen. They are shutting their eyes to it. They don't want to hear, they don't want to see anything. That's why I talk to you directly. When the recession comes and we have no money, if you thought health care was in trouble now, if you thought the education system has been under assault for five years, if you thought housing might have been a disaster, and our attack on the problem we will have with senior citizens in 10 year's time, if you thought all these were problems, you haven't seen a thing yet. It's going to be the ugliest thing that Ontarians, you taxpayers, will have ever witnessed. Then you'll remember the words from the Premier and Brad Clark, who is cocky today, who says, "Don't listen to New Democrats. It's just gloom that he's articulating."

Mr Clark: Don't worry, be happy.

Mr Marchese: Yes, Brad Clark from Stoney Creek just said, "Don't worry, be happy." I tell you, worry now for the future and worry now for yourselves and your children down the line because they are not planning for a bad economy at all. According to them it's always going to be like this and the economy in Ontario will always be on the rise. I tell you, it's not my design to not make it so. It is the mere economic illogic they have given Ontario that will cause this disaster down the line. I know you're looking for tax cuts, good taxpayers, decent taxpayers. I know you want it and I know why you want it, because for many, many years you hadn't seen a pay

increase. You were convinced by the corporate media that the only way to get an increase was to get a tax cut.

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The corporate media, God bless them, those who own those corporations said, "Inflation was truly, truly bad in the 1990s," and whole public across the land said, "Yes, inflation is bad." After we beat inflation to the ground, at tremendous cost to the workers, the corporate media then said, "The deficit is the monster in society." They beat that monster to the ground, didn't they?

All the public in Ontario said, "The deficit is the problem." Then, when they dealt that little animal and serpent to the ground, the corporate media took on something else. The corporate media and the big moguls with pecunia, the instruments of which you are—their servant—said, "Together we can do it. We can give you the tax cuts you need." The corporate media sold it to the public and the instruments of misdeeds did the worst—and the best to please those who have the bucks.

You know what the problem is for New Democrats, taxpayer? I've got to tell you what it is, for your own benefit. We don't have any media to counteract what we get on a daily basis from the general corporate media and from the print media in particular: the Toronto Sun, who loves us not; the Globe and Mail, who loves us less; the National Post, who doesn't even love us but detests New Democrats because we attack their agenda. We attack their corporate greed and they don't like it. We are their number one enemy.

What we need, good taxpayers, is a print media so that you can, from time to time, pick up a different newspaper that says, "Here's a different view." Wouldn't it be lovely to have a different view so that people could properly assess the bad, meaning the right, versus the good, meaning the left? In the end, at least people would have an option to be able to say, "OK, now I understand this better, and I can support either the left or the right." But without a media that defends what New Democrats stand for, we are always going to be in political trouble. Do you understand that, citizens? That's our problem.

Many of you assume that the media is neutral, that you read information on the basis of objective coverage. And you would never, never dream that the National Post—oh, good God, no—would somehow be so perversely right. Most of you would never say that. Most of you would never say that the Toronto Sun would be so perversely right wing. But I tell you, they are.

It's not objective media that you get. It's very, very unobjective, as a result of which, when you read it you say, "Now we know why we hate New Democrats," because day in and day out the Toronto Sun and the National Post and the Globe attack what New Democrats stand for and they continue to praise what these instruments of corporate greed put out, day in and day out.

David Crane from the Toronto Star said, "One factor, and a big one," that accounts for why the economy has been doing well, "has been the booming US economy, which developed an insatiable appetite for foreign pro-

ducts." If I say that, they'll laugh. If you quote at least another source which is in the Business Today, Toronto Star—but David Crane is a business writer and he admits, like so many other writers, objectively, that we are lucky because of the US economy and their boom.

I've got to tell you I'm profoundly worried, so I say to you taxpayers: save your money. Save your money for the future, because this government is not worried about what's going to happen to you. I am telling you, you've got to save and don't spend the money, because you're going to be in trouble down the line.

Mr Clark: You're trying to create a crisis now.

Mr Marchese: Brad Clark says, "Don't do that, Marchese, because if you do that, you're going to create the crisis." Good taxpayers, I leave it to your good judgment: either spend now and help the Tories keep this economy chugging along or consider your future options and consider whether or not this government is going to be there for you when the economy tumbles.

In a balanced budget situation, where you cannot incur deficits, you are on your own. All the safety nets we are desperately looking for when things are bad, like welfare, like a health care system, like the education system we depend on, like the social services we depend on—particularly our mothers and fathers who are a bit older than we are, victims of violence, those people who rely on government's help—are not going to be there. This is the non-government government that says, "We are relying on volunteers to do the job of helping to tend the seniors and the frail and the people with disabilities and victims of violence. We are relying on the church to help us out. We are relying on the beneficence of the corporate sector to give out its largesse and help out the victims of this society."

I've got to tell you, we've had volunteers in the past, but you folks are now relying, as part of your economic strategy, on churches, on volunteers, on the corporate sector to whom you have given so many billions of dollars; you rely on them to give it back to the poor. You are not the government any more. You are not there. You don't exist. I don't know why you are here if you don't exist. If you are the non-government government, you should just please do us a favour and disappear, for God's sake, because you're not helping anyone. It's a big, big hurting you're laying on a whole lot of people.

Health care: we have a health care crisis, and we've had it for five years. Every year you dump a couple of million dollars back into the system. You take out billions and then you put a couple of million back. Every six months you make another announcement. It's a little patching up of the problem here and there with a couple of million. Then they say, "Oh, we're spending so much more than ever before." The population has grown and inflation has grown, it's true, but that's irrelevant because this is the government that has given more than any other government before.

Education: they cut \$1.5 billion out of our education system and then they tell you, "Oh, no, we put in more." If you trust the Minister of Education, Madam Ecker, if

you believe her, then God bless, but parents and teachers and activists know that \$1.5 billion has been taken out of elementary and secondary schools, making it an injurious thing for the system, making it difficult to survive. Teachers are sometimes saying, "We're not going to help to salvage the system every time this government makes a cut. We're going to do our job, and we'll let them worry about the repercussions."

They introduced Bill 74, which hurts teachers profoundly. It hurts their morale and their profession to the extent that they say, "If we've got to choose between teaching an extra period now and doing the extra-curricular, we don't have the energy any more." Then Madam Ecker stands up and says, "The teachers are playing politics," not her. Oh, no, it's not Janet Ecker playing politics; it's the teachers playing politics. She introduces Bill 74 that whacks teachers, their morale and their profession, and then she has the nerve, the fortitude, the guts to blame the teachers for causing the extra-curricular problems. You've got to love them. She's got a gift.

Post-secondary education: We have fewer dollars going into our university system than ever before—\$1.6 billion in operational cuts to the university system. It's true, they restored some, but the cuts are severe. So many of our buildings are in trouble in terms of repair because the money is not going in. Within the next couple of years, we're going to need 10,000 professors, and the government is not there to prepare for that loss. We're already short now. We're going to be short of professors in a couple of years, and the minister is not there. We're going to have a double cohort, with grades 12 and 13 coming together in the next couple of years, and the minister is not planning. No one is planning on the part of the government because they are the non-government government. They don't plan. They don't worry. You have to worry for yourself.

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The shortage of professors, dilapidated facilities across our Ontario land, and the minister finds the time to introduce for-profit private universities. They say, "What's wrong with that? It's choice." Taxpayers of Ontario, let me tell you what this choice is all about. It's about paying \$40,000 for a general degree, and in a very specialized field it's about paying \$80,000 for your degree. What kind of access is that and for whom? How is it innovative for the students of Ontario, except for the few rich little boys and girls that want to get there, the one's who have the money? How does that expand the capacity? How does that deal with the fact that we're going to have 90,000 more students by the end of this decade? The capacity's not there. We won't have it. So in answer to that question, the minister says, "Private universities. That'll do it." But it won't do it. It's only going to accommodate a couple of rich young men and women who will join the club of these private universities, but it's not going to include my children. And it's not going to include your children, taxpayers. It's not.

It's a select group. It's a select club where if you've got the pecunia you can go and if you don't, you don't.

How the government accommodates the rich. How this non-government government is the instrument of the corporate sector over and over again in every way. Just the other day, last week or two ago, the Minister of Comsoc went after welfare recipients again and said, "Unless you welfare recipients get tested for drugs, you're not going to receive the benefits." It was a malevolent move by the government—I wouldn't necessarily say the Minister of Comsoc, because he's but one member of the cabinet; it's general malevolence of the government—to stigmatize the poor, victimize them even further. You know, you good taxpayers, you never go after those who avoid paying taxes, the real corporate greedy kind of guy who avoids taxes and knows how to do it and has a system behind it to get away with it. You can't see that, can you? But you can see a welfare recipient who is taking money from welfare and then you have this government victimizing them in such a way that they are made to be the malevolent source, the scourge of society.

The real scourge is over there, the perpetrators of this malevolence, right there. Because they don't go after the people who have got the money, oh no. In fact, they go and give our money, your money, away to them; \$5 billion in this last budget goes to the corporate sector, and \$700 million goes to those who play the market and up to a hundred thousand bucks they don't have to pay one red cent. God bless. Look at this. You understand, these are the guys at the computer, right? Just playing with your money, playing with our money at the computer.

Mr Clark: Stand in your place.

Mr Marchese: I'm just showing you how they're working away on the computer. See how the money moves from one place to the other, and at the end of it, if they make a hundred thousand bucks this government says, "You don't have to pay any taxes because you earned it." You earned it working real hard at the little computer moving money around every second, every minute across the globe and you become rich doing that. That's not corporate welfare, is it, John? That's not corporate welfare, to give my money, your money, the taxpayers' money away?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): That's his money.

Mr Marchese: Did you hear John? He said, "That's his money." Speaker, stay with me for a minute. John, if you don't tax that guy who makes money, that's my money, because you then go and tax the rest to make up for that. Please, come on, get a grip for God's sake. It's his money? Wait a minute.

Welcome, Premier. I'm going to try to be gentle with you today. Premier, did you hear? Premier, stick with me for a couple of minutes.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Brad Clark from Stoney Creek and the minister for COMSOC say, "It is his money." I understand it is his money if he makes it. But if you say to him,

Premier, that he doesn't have to pay any taxes, I think it is wrong. It is not good economic politics. It is not good economic policy, is it?

Come on, Speaker, nod; help me out. I need your wisdom. I need somebody's wisdom in here, because it doesn't flow from the other side—five billion bucks of my money, your money, going away to the corporate sector in good economic times. I say, OK, you might as a Tory government want to help the corporate sector in a bad economy, but you're helping them with \$5 billion of my money, your money, in a good economy. John, please. It is my money. When you don't tax that guy who's wealthy, you're taking it from me.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Sorry if I am somehow bursting some little balloon of sorts.

Shelley, are we together on this or am I missing something?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm with you, Rosie; you're right on.

Mr Marchese: The poor people—we have two Canadas. We have two Canadas and we have two Ontarios: the rich and the poor.

Hon Mr Baird: Rosie, you're better on TV than live.

Mr Marchese: Come on, Minister, don't say that. What we saw in the latest Stats Canada numbers the other day reflects a growing inequality in our society. It is a failure, in my view, of the policies of the federal government and your policies. You're both responsible for that because poverty isn't something that provinces are responsible for alone. It is at both levels.

I think the principle of equity, the principle of fairness and even the principle of justice that Pierre Trudeau advocated for in the early 1970s, that principle that was so much a part of the ethos of what it meant to be Canadian, is disappearing because what we've got are two solitudes: the rich and the poor. If you think people are waiting in line at the food banks now in a good economy, imagine what's going to happen in the next couple of months as we see the disaster that is about to befall us when the US crumbles. If you thought the poor were really dirt poor in a good economy, what's going to happen next?

When we talk about these things, we have to talk about how children are affected by these policies. I remember, Shelley, the Tories used to talk about the problems we are leaving for our children and their children's children. I tell you, the legacy you leave when you don't take care of the very poor now, the legacy you leave for our future generations of young people who will perpetuate their own cycle of poverty because you people don't want to get involved and deal with it, is going to cause a health disaster for us all. It is a health issue. People who are poor are going to need more and more help. People who don't eat well are going to need more and more attention. People who are not doing well economically, psychologically, do poorly in school. Those who do poorly in school are likely to commit

crimes if they have such deep-rooted problems that none of you worry about solving.

All this law-and-order agenda of yours is superficial fluff that you throw out to the taxpayers to make them feel you are the real crime fighters, the government that's going to take on violence, take on crime—all fluff, just to make the Tory taxpayers feel good out there. You do nothing except provide good titles of bills that make people feel good, like the Safe Streets Act, the one that goes after the squeegee kids, the horrible of horrible squeegee kids cleaning windows. You cleaned them out of our streets, didn't you? Oh, boy, that goes after real crime against women, against seniors, domestic violence. That really does a lot to help them.

This budget is going to be an economic disaster. This non-government government is not preparing for the bad times. I tell you, folks, we are in for a real rough ride in the next little while. Keep an eye on it because it's not going to be recession-proof.

1740

Mr Dunlop: It's a pleasure to speak on third reading of Bill 152, the Balanced Budgets for Brighter Futures Act. This act will introduce a made-in-Ontario income tax system that will allow our provincial government to make more significant cuts in taxes for the benefit of Ontarians. I'd like to thank Minister Eves and the parliamentary assistant for their comments on this bill, and as well there were the colourful comments from the member from Trinity-Spadina.

This legislation will enact a budget we introduced last April. As most of you know, the announcement of the 2000 provincial budget in this House was a very historic day for the people of our province, as our government, the Mike Harris government, balanced the books not only this year, but it was shown that we had balanced them in the previous year as well. As the finance minister noted at the time, "The last time the Ontario budget was balanced in two consecutive fiscal years was in 1942-43 and 1943-44," nearly 57 years ago. In fact, we are now in the unique position of having a surplus. In the economic statement, Finance Minister Eves announced that the Ontario government for this year is projecting a \$1.4-billion surplus, with the majority of that surplus to be applied to the province's debt. As Minister Eves said a month ago, "Our economy is still growing faster than all of the G7 nations. Our businesses are still creating jobs at a vigorous pace and hard-working Ontarians are still creating new opportunities" by investing in our province.

One of the reasons the economy is running so strongly is the leadership this government has shown in the area of tax reductions. In 1996, this government made 10 tax cuts; in 1997, 20 tax cuts; in the 1997-98 interim budget, eight more tax cuts; and in 1998, 29 more tax cuts; in the 1998-99 interim budget, two more tax cuts were announced; last year 30 more tax cuts were announced; and in this year's budget, 67 more. That's 166 tax cuts since 1995. We've seen the revenues projected. As we've cut those taxes, we've seen the revenues increased. By

the end of this fiscal year, we'll have another \$14 billion more than we had in 1995 in revenues for the province.

Included in this year's tax reductions is a \$200 tax rebate, the tax dividend cheque that is to be issued to what I would like to call the investors in the Ontario economy, the people of our great province. Before this government was elected, the investors were forced to put in more money, but received nothing in return from Liberal and NDP governments. We know that in the last decade we refer to, they were told to give and give. In fact, 65 tax cuts in that period—I'm sorry, I apologize: 65 tax increases, 32 and 33. That's what they got in return, more tax hikes. Thanks to this government, they are finally getting some of their hard-earned money back in the form of a cheque. Our government understands that the tax money we collect is the people's money and that they should get some of that money back.

I notice now that the feds are thinking of doing the same thing. They're saying it's for heating, but where do you think they got the idea from? They knew it was successful. I know that in my riding—the \$200 doesn't sound like a lot of money to some of you people who like to spend, spend, spend, but from my point of view I have an awful lot of families, particularly young families, who like to use that money for winter clothing for their kids or for Christmas gifts. It was maybe for a small weekend vacation for a couple. They enjoyed the money and they enjoyed having it back.

The result of those tax cuts has been more new jobs. Let's take a look at the stats from November. Ontario gained 34,000 net new jobs in the month of November. Full-time employment rose by 27,300. Youth employment rose 1,700. The youth jobless rate rose slightly, from 12.4% to 12.5%. Since the throne speech in September 1995, Ontario has gained 830,000 net new jobs. Since the first instalment of Ontario's personal tax cuts in July 1996, Ontario has actually gained 794,000 net new jobs.

Recently—I think it was two days ago—we had the announcement from Minister Baird's Ministry of Community and Social Services on the latest rolls. We've now found that our welfare rate rolls have decreased consistently for 34 consecutive months. In my riding, in 1995, we had 11,000 welfare cases in Simcoe county. Those rates have gone down 69.4% and, just in the recent announcement last week, we're now down to 3,600 cases. People may talk about the local services realignment cost to municipalities and that type of thing, but the fact of the matter is, with the assessment growth we've seen in the province and with the number of cases off welfare, it's been very attractive to the municipalities as well.

I'm very happy that the federal government now understands the importance of tax cuts as well, that they can create a strong economy. I remember reading in the *National Post* where the Prime Minister—and I know it's been mentioned a couple of times here—while at Duke University, offered rare praise for the tax regime of our government. He said that basically Ontario has the lowest

personal income tax, which creates an attractive investment environment. I praise the Prime Minister for going into the United States and complimenting the work that we've done here in the province of Ontario. The fact of the matter is that almost half the jobs created in our country in the last five years have been created here in Ontario. Of course, you all know that we have about a third of the population.

I was impressed when I saw the tax cuts that were introduced in the mini federal budget, which looked more like a budget introduced by our government. It only took the federal government five years to realize that tax cuts create jobs.

I am hopeful that they will respond to our Premier's letter calling on reduction in employment insurance premiums. We understand, and I think it's acknowledged by pretty near everyone in this country, the same as we acknowledge the federal cuts of Canada health and social transfers to our health care system, that our employment insurance premiums are at an all-time high and need to be reduced.

The 2000 budget that we've talked about here this afternoon, and that we hopefully will pass later on, also called for the creation of a made-for-Ontario income tax policy, which we are fulfilling with this legislation. This will allow the flexibility to enhance Ontario's non-refundable tax credits for students, people with disabilities and their caregivers. The \$60-million increase in tax benefits will assist both part-time and full-time students with the cost of their post-secondary education and help people with disabilities live independently and with dignity.

The made-for-Ontario income tax system introduced in this bill is desirable. However, the federal government must begin to realize that the interests of taxpayers are different in different provinces. Taxpayers in Ontario have interests that are unique to Ontario and different from the interests of taxpayers in Saskatchewan, for example, and likewise those in BC have different concerns from those in Nova Scotia or Newfoundland.

1750

There's been a lot of talk from the opposition about money that might have been increased to the overall debt. I wonder how the Liberals from the opposition side would look at that. I'd like to refer back to the 1995 Liberal red book. They talked about how a Liberal government in 1995 would balance the budget. I'll read from it: "A Liberal government will create a strong and competitive environment that encourages the private sector to grow and create jobs. We will balance Ontario's budget within four years." Really, that means Liberals, if they were going to balance it within four years, would have to run deficits for four years, and that means the Liberals would increase the debt in four years as well. This is from your red book in 1995.

We put in our Common Sense Revolution in 1995 the graphs and plans, and it was obvious that there would be an increase in debt. But you said the same thing in yours. However, do Liberals think our government should have

cut \$11 billion, the size of the deficit that we were facing when we came into office? Remember, that's the \$1 billion an hour. How were we going to get rid of \$11 billion? By cutting health care and education? Of course we didn't. We slowly added to the debt and, as in the plan and after four years, in 1999, there we had it: a balanced budget. We're very proud of that, because we followed the plan.

We should talk a little bit about tax cuts. From the 1995 Liberal red book: Ontario Liberals "will cut spending by more than \$4 billion." You're going to cut spending and you're going to balance the budget in four years. Where was the money going to come from? Is it back to the spendometer again? That's the type of thing we have to think about. You didn't have a plan. You don't have a policy. We're back and forth, back and forth; say one thing in one part of Ontario and say something else in another part of Ontario.

The fact of the matter is that we on this side of the House are very proud of the budget we've presented this year. It comes out with a surplus; 830,000 net new jobs; almost 600,000 people off the welfare rolls. We are proud of what Finance Minister Eves has accomplished. He set out his plan in 1995. We followed it in 1999 in the Blueprint.

I think every member of this House should support this Balanced Budgets for Brighter Futures Act. It's something that every Ontarian should be very proud of, that they have a government that can carry on this way.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I am standing in the House this evening as the representative of the people who sent me here to have the members of the government understand that certainly I, as an elected representative and as a member of the Liberal Party of Ontario, will not be able to support the legislation that's before us this evening for many reasons.

I am really very surprised when I hear some of the presentations that are made by members of the government in terms of how well we're doing in this province and to present that this is the very best plan to serve the people of Ontario.

I only have a very minutes so I'll touch some of the issues I think are very important that relate to the children of the province of Ontario. My leader has asked this government, in light of the fact that there are more children living in poverty—42% of the people who frequent food banks in the province of Ontario are children. Dalton McGuinty has recognized that a way to immediately address that tragedy, that unacceptable reality in these strong economic times, would be to offer a cost-of-living allowance to those people who rely on the province to support their family. That should be a part of your plan and it isn't.

I'm here to talk about the fact that the largest rising demographic within that group we refer to as "the homeless" are families. Yet your government, in this plan that is before the Legislature today, has nothing to allow families to access more affordable housing. If children

are to do well in society, if they are to achieve, they need good food and they need homes. In these strong economic times, ladies and gentlemen, I think it's quite unacceptable that in your fiscal plan you have not aggressively put in place a policy that would address those two very serious issues.

Another item that's not in your plan relates to education. Dalton McGuinty has presented the government with a very reasonable plan for consideration. If you want to, take it and amend it, but certainly do something to alleviate the stress and the strife that has beset our education system. The Education Improvement Commission just last week gave that very direction, that we need to get past the very unhealthy climate in our schools. We have presented a plan and it would require some additional dollars—only a fraction of the dollars that you've taken from education, but it would require some dollars—and they would be very well spent because it would support students in this province. It would enable them to access programs that they're not now able to access. It's not part of this plan that's before the House tonight.

Just a few moments ago we heard the member from Simcoe talk about the debt. I have to say that I'm very sad that under your government the debt has increased significantly. What's so very sad about that is debt is really deferred taxation. These children who are right now not being supported are going to be asked in the future to pay for services they didn't get, that they need. That's the plan that we're asked to come here tonight and support. I can't, as a Liberal, as an elected representative of the people who sent me, because the people that I talk to in my riding are looking for things like a healthy education community. They're looking for programs that support children and families in Ontario. I know they would not want their representative to stand in this House and nod to a plan that does not address those very important needs.

If I had more time, I would be able to make many more references to numerous areas that would relate to my riding, but I certainly am very appreciative of the opportunity I've had this evening.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I am delighted, actually, to have—it's less than five minutes.

I'll just make a couple of comments on Bill 152, which is nothing other than the balanced budgets for brighter futures legislation. I think the title is missing something. I think the Premier missed the boat when he didn't finish saying it: "Bill 152, balanced budgets for brighter futures for whom?" I think it's missing that very important part: brighter for whom? I think it's just for some segment of our society.

Let me take this couple of minutes to say to my people, especially the seniors who will be looking at this particular piece of legislation with some considerable concern—they are facing a long cold winter and they are wondering if now they will have to divert some of their pension money to pay for the increase in heating costs and hydro costs or perhaps spend some on gifts for the

little ones or purchase some of the medications that they went without for some period of time. I can tell you that this legislation doesn't do anything to make the future, or even this immediate winter coming, any brighter for my seniors at the Gord Risk Community Centre or those in the Stanley DiLuca Community Centre or those seniors who have no place to go other than one particular room day in and day out—with no chance of going to Florida—at the Grand Ravine or the J. Booth Community Centre. That is the only place they go, in and out. They can't afford anything else. Or the seniors in Humber Summit who have nowhere to go other than walking back and forth from their home to the nearest plaza, or the seniors who lost their one room, once a week, because of the cuts of this government. The seniors at Blue Haven don't have one room once a week any more because of the cuts. The school has closed the room on them.

1800

I don't think that the future looks any brighter for those people. It's quite ironic that just a couple of months ago we had this big hullabaloo with the \$200 rebate. I'm still getting calls saying, "When am I going to get my \$200?" This is coming from seniors, not from those well to do, not from the rich people. It's coming from the seniors saying, "Look, we are facing the holidays, we are facing the winter, and when am I going to get my \$200?"

They won't be getting any \$200 because the government of Mr Harris has decided to give that kind of money, more than \$1 billion, to the people who really don't need \$200. It's hard to explain to some seniors when they say, "This is our government. They should be looking after us." Oh yes, indeed. They say, "We didn't vote for any government to cut our pension, to impose more user fees. That money belongs to us. We should be the ones the government should be giving the \$200. We need it." They won't be getting it.

So the future is not looking any brighter for those people in need of assistance. It's even worse. It's more ironic, because with so much pomp, so much pomposity, we have the Minister of Finance and the Premier saying, "We have \$1.4 billion and we don't know what to do. You know what? We're going to pay down the debt." That's \$1.4 billion of surplus.

This is our people's money, so give it back to them in one form or another, but give it to the people who really make the difference. I hope that the spirit of the holidays could really come down and make the difference for this government, to see that we have a lot of people out there suffering at this time, at a time when they should not be in that situation, because as we know, the economy supposedly is booming.

But for whom? Certainly not for the people on welfare, the pensioners, the single-income people and the people with low income. Having said that, my time is up. I wish everyone happy holidays and the best of the New Year, and to you as well, Mr Speaker.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): There are a number of items you would like to canvass when you have a bill of this kind, but time is always confining. If I

were a member of the New Democratic Party, I could speak for about an hour, because under the provisions we have in this House—I know it makes the House leader of the Liberals happy to a great degree—New Democrats, despite the fact they won nine seats in the last election and got 12% of the vote, seem to get one-third of the speaking time for bills of this kind. So when people at home wonder why there's so much NDP time, and the member for Sudbury East, now Nickel Belt, will be up the next time for her long period of time, I am confined as a result to 10 minutes in this House.

Ms Martel: How about the MRIs?

Mr Bradley: But MRIs I will mention. We have our MRI now, because we fought for it for a long time.

I want to touch on a few subjects that this bill does not deal with sufficiently. One is retirement homes in this province. We have a genuine need for long-term care, particularly in the Niagara Peninsula, because we have probably the oldest population per capita in Ontario.

There are people who have to go to retirement homes. Those retirement homes aren't the supervised nursing homes inspected from time to time by the Ministry of Health, or municipally operated homes. They are privately operated homes that are called retirement homes. Unfortunately, they are not inspected very much unless they belong to some organization. Often we receive complaints, as MPPs, about them. I think the government would do well to invest in a regime which would inspect and ensure the quality of care that is received in those retirement homes. I call upon the provincial government to do that.

Second, I was delighted to read today—because we have been preoccupied in this province with the horrible possibility of a film being made about the life of Paul Bernardo and his so-called notorious exploits. I notice today that, "Telefilm Canada will not sponsor a film based on a book about serial murderer Paul Bernardo and his wife, Karla Homolka, the federal government agency announced late yesterday.

"We just said no to the project because it wasn't up to par in comparison to the other projects that were submitted," Jeanine Basile, a spokeswoman for Telefilm in Montreal, said." And justifiably so. I know that the provincial government would not want to provide any assistance in terms of either tax incentives or direct assistance to have this film made, or the use of any government properties.

I don't want to dwell on that, but my suspicion is—and it's strongly supported from what I've heard in this House—that nobody in this House agrees that film should be made. I think anybody of goodwill would agree that film shouldn't be made. That's why I sent Peter Simpson, the producer and the president of the company, which I think is Norstar Entertainment, a letter asking that they just take a pass on this one, that they not make this film. I hope that comes to fruition.

I want to talk a bit about the cost of energy. My colleague the member for Pembroke and my leader, Dalton McGuinty, have both asked questions in this House about

people who are unfortunately facing a real crunch as the price of natural gas, the price of heating oil and the price of other kinds of fuel go up considerably in this province. The cost of the operation of a personal vehicle has gone up considerably. I happen to think there's gouging going on at this time. I just wish the government, which is large as life when it comes to putting the boots to poor people, to victimizing the poorest in this province, to taking them on, would have as much intestinal fortitude when it comes to dealing with the corporate giants, the oil barons and the gas barons that we have.

I recognize that part of the problem is demand. I wish I could say something positive in this regard, but this government has completely abandoned any efforts to bring about energy conservation. We're going to need it in the long run. There's only so much gas out there, so much oil out there, so much of any energy which is non-renewable, and some day it's going to be gone. We have to really get into energy conservation and alternative forms of energy. I hope the government, with the crisis that we're facing this winter, will indeed do that. I don't want to hear from the oil companies, the gas companies sending you, Mr Speaker, or me or any other member of this Legislature a long letter saying, "This is why the price of gasoline is up." I just looked at the profits of the oil companies. I know why the prices are up. The independent dealers, unfortunately, are squeezed in this situation.

I heard the government members brag about the \$200. Most people I talked to in the province said, "Why don't you apply that to our health care system, to protecting our environment, to increasing the value of our education system?" Personally, I am giving my money to Community Care in St Catharines, which assists people of very modest means who are having a difficult time economically. I can tell you one thing: I'm not asking them to test them for drug use before they receive the money. I thought that was the most demeaning thing I've seen. Just when I thought this government had reached the lowest of the low by putting a lien on people's personal property, they turn around and say, "We're going to test those who are on social assistance."

The young minister, the 20-something or maybe now 30-year-old YPC, who's the Minister of Community and Social Services, with his backdrop with the needles and so on and I think a line saying, "Here's where you call fraud"—I'd like to see a fraud line for those who are evading income tax or other big-time crime of a white-collar nature that you see in this province. I just thought that was demeaning—and I'm no left-winger on those issues, I can tell you that. I'm one who believes that we should never tolerate fraud when it comes to receiving social assistance, but I'm also a person who believes that those who genuinely need that social assistance should not be subjected to the indignity of a drug test.

When my leader, Dalton McGuinty, suggested that perhaps we should test members of the Legislature, he said that tongue in cheek, but it certainly showed what a silly idea it was. I know the people at Community Care,

when they show up for assistance, aren't asked for some drug test. All members of the Liberal caucus agreed they would be giving their \$200 to some charity within their community or within the province.

I hope the government will commit more dollars to the environment. I raised the issue of the Swaru incinerator today. The problem is that somebody's falsifying the evidence, just as they did in Walkerton, and there's nobody overseeing it, nobody watching. The reason is that ministry staff are stretched to the limit. They're not lazy, they're not stupid, they're not uncaring, they're simply stretched to the limit, and there are so few of them. As I said the other day, if they say they have those 900 people around, some of them must be disguised as empty chairs, because they're certainly not in those offices.

I want to say that it's very unfortunate people in Niagara have to go outside of Niagara to get their health care. People who need an ophthalmologist's treatment often have to go outside the Niagara Peninsula, and for cancer treatment and other procedures they often have to go to the United States to get them in a timely fashion. That simply isn't right. We have the dollars, but we decided we would give \$4 billion in tax cuts to the huge corporations in this province, the people who attend the fundraisers of the Conservative Party in this province, and that is wrong when there's a genuine need out there.

I know there's a competition out there, as you would know in your community, Mr Speaker, for the charitable dollars, because the government has cut back so much in so many areas that there are a lot of people who are now fundraising who didn't have to do so before. But they're in competition with so many other good causes out there that it's very difficult for them, and I don't think we're getting the service we should.

I want to talk very briefly about the doctor shortage in the Niagara Peninsula. Unless you're in the GTA, the greater Toronto area, you have a hard time getting specialists and family physicians. People phone our constituency offices and we can't produce those family physicians. They become frustrated that we can't do so, but we cannot. That will involve an expenditure of dollars, an investment in health care for the incentives to have doctors come to our area in programs. I strongly support that. I'd rather have that than a darn tax cut.

Last, I want to talk about the roads, because it's wintertime. No matter what the Minister of Transportation says, nobody in this province believes that the clearing of roads in winter, the servicing of roads in winter, is the way it once was. There's now a much more dangerous situation on the highways, with ice on the highways, with snow on the highways and bad conditions. Even some of the information provided to people who are phoning to ask what the road conditions are is not timely.

You can make all these cuts in the world, but we are paying over and over again for the tax cuts for the rich in this province by lost services. I'd prefer to add to the

quality of life rather than give money to rich people in the form of huge tax incentives.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Eves has moved third reading of Bill 152, An Act to implement the 2000 Budget to establish a made-in-Ontario tax system and to amend various Acts.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1813 to 1818.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield

Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael D.
Hastings, John
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Snobelen, John
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David

Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie L.
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Gary J.

Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John

Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Conway, Sean G.
Crozier, Bruce

Curling, Alvin
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario

Martel, Shelley
Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 56; the nays are 21.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiles, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguee aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister of Correctional Services, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre des Services correctionnels leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Rob (PC)
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Eric-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines		
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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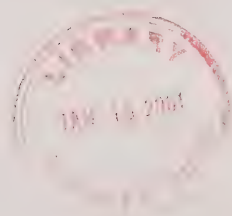
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**First Session, 37th Parliament**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**Première session, 37^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Wednesday 20 December 2000****Mercredi 20 décembre 2000**Speaker
Honourable Gary CarrPrésident
L'honorable Gary CarrClerk
Claude L. DesRosiersGreffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 décembre 2000

Report continued from volume A.

1820

HUMAN TISSUE GIFT AMENDMENT ACT (TRILLIUM GIFT OF LIFE NETWORK), 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE DON DE TISSUS HUMAINS (RÉSEAU TRILLIUM POUR LE DON DE VIE)

Mrs Witmer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to amend the Human Tissue Gift Act / Projet de loi 142, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le don de tissus humains.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

IMITATION FIREARMS REGULATION ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA RÉGLEMENTATION DES FAUSSES ARMES À FEU

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 2, 2000 on the motion for second reading of Bill 133, An Act to regulate the sale of imitation firearms / Projet de loi 133, Loi visant à réglementer la vente des fausses armes à feu.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Further debate? There being none, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): No, Speaker. Committee of the whole House.

VICTIMS' BILL OF RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA CHARTE DES DROITS DES VICTIMES D'ACTES CRIMINELS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 1, 2000 on the motion for second reading of Bill 114, An Act to amend the Victims' Bill of Rights, 1995 / Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Charte de 1995 des droits des victimes d'actes criminels.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Further debate? Seeing none, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

MOTORIZED SNOW VEHICLES AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MOTONEIGES

Mr Jackson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to promote snowmobile trail sustainability and enhance safety and enforcement / Projet de loi 101, Loi visant à favoriser la durabilité des pistes de motoneige et à accroître la sécurité et les mesures d'exécution.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Debate? Seeing none, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

CITY OF KAWARTHA LAKES ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA CITÉ DE KAWARTHA LAKES

Mr Clement moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 170, An Act respecting the new municipality of The Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes / Projet de loi 170, Loi concernant la nouvelle municipalité appelée The Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

ST. CLAIR PARKS COMMISSION ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA COMMISSION
DES PARCS DE LA SAINTE-CLAIRE

Mr Jackson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to repeal and replace the St. Clair Parkway Commission Act / Projet de loi 177, Loi abrogeant et remplaçant la Loi sur la Commission de la promenade Sainte-Claire.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay".

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

Government House leader?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order 72(c), I'm now asking for unanimous consent to move to third reading of Bill 177.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

ST. CLAIR PARKS COMMISSION ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA COMMISSION
DES PARCS DE LA SAINTE-CLAIRE

Mr Jackson moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to repeal and replace the St. Clair Parkway Commission Act / Projet de loi 177, Loi abrogeant et remplaçant la Loi sur la Commission de la promenade Sainte-Claire.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay".

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order 72(c), I'm asking now for unanimous consent to move third reading of Bill 170.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

CITY OF KAWARTHA LAKES ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA CITÉ
DE KAWARTHA LAKES

Mr Clement moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 170, An Act respecting the new municipality of The Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes / Projet

de loi 170, Loi concernant la nouvelle municipalité appelée The Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay".

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

1830

HUMAN TISSUE GIFT AMENDMENT ACT
(TRILLIUM GIFT OF LIFE NETWORK), 2000LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE DON DE TISSUS HUMAINS
(RÉSEAU TRILLIUM
POUR LE DON DE VIE)

Mr Clark moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to amend the Human Tissue Gift Act / Projet de loi 142, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le don de tissus humains.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): I rise in the House today for third reading of a profoundly important piece of legislation, the Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act. Introduced just over a month ago by Minister Witmer, this vital legislation builds on the outstanding work of the Premier's Advisory Board on Organ and Tissue Donation and moves the government closer to its millennium challenge goal of doubling organ and tissue donation rates by 2005.

As you may recall, at the beginning of this year Premier Harris established the Advisory Board on Organ and Tissue Donation, chaired by Mr Don Cherry. The advisory board was asked to consult with donors, recipients, families, hospitals, doctors, nurses, health professionals and international experts, and come back with recommendations on how to improve Ontario's donation system and ultimately save the lives of many more people, people of all ages, in Ontario. Those who participated on the Premier's advisory board have selflessly donated their time and expertise, and I want to thank them all on behalf of the government and on behalf of the people of this province.

The result of their hard work, the Action Plan for Ontario, provided the framework for the legislation which would establish a comprehensive organ and tissue procurement system. The legislation would create the Trillium Gift of Life Network, a new agency to plan, co-ordinate and support organ and tissue donation across Ontario; would begin phasing in routine referral, which means that designated hospitals would notify the network when a potentially suitable donor becomes available; would begin phasing in required request, which means that in the event of an imminent death, if advised by the network, designated hospitals would make reasonable efforts to contact the patient or the patient's family to

discuss organ and tissue donation; would ensure the development of organ and tissue donation policies and committees and in-hospital donor co-ordinators in designated Ontario hospitals. As well, the network would coordinate public education and awareness activities, and assist hospitals in developing professional education programs to support the organ and tissue donation process.

Right now in Ontario some 600 people receive organ transplants every year. For many patients this much-needed surgery means a second chance for a longer and better life. That's why it's so important to train health professionals on how to approach donor families in a compassionate and sensitive way and that's why it's so important to provide people with the information they need and the opportunities they need to make informed choices. This legislation would create the framework to ensure such training and to provide the necessary information.

It's important to emphasize that we continue to respect the rights of individuals and their families to make the decisions about organ and tissue donation that best suit them. That's why organ and tissue donation continues to be voluntary. We recognize that organ and tissue donation is an important and difficult choice for individuals and families to make, and it's a choice that's often made when a loved one is seriously ill or injured.

It's also important to realize and emphasize that we cannot substantially increase Ontario's organ donor rate and organ and tissue transplants without a system that will deal with the current complexities. It was clear from the Premier's advisory board report that no single action can address all the complex concerns of organ and tissue donation; nor will it increase the donor rate. Therefore, this legislation would establish the Trillium Gift of Life Network to lead a number of initiatives. The network would report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The Trillium Gift of Life Network is intended to plan, promote and co-ordinate organ and tissue procurement and distribution in Ontario. It would work closely with designated hospitals and health providers to develop methods to best deliver organ and tissue donation services.

I'm proud to say that our government has already taken a number of important steps to support organ and tissue donation. For instance, we have announced increased funding for organ and tissue donation and transplantation, from the current level of \$47 million to more than \$120 million by 2005. As well, we've added 41 new dialysis units across the province to expand kidney dialysis services. The topic of organ and tissue donation has been added to the grades 11 and 12 health and physical education and science curricula.

We have the clinical and technological advancements to help us move forward. Furthermore, the success rate of organ and tissue transplants is increasing, and that means more lives can be saved.

Should the Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act be enacted, we can be confident that the future of Ontarians who need organ and tissue transplants, be they children

or be they adults, will be vastly improved through this legislation.

I can't say it as well as people who have experienced it. I have in my hand a letter to the editor that was published in the *Hamilton Spectator* on December 16:

"My brother, Jeff VanderWiele, has been a diabetic since age two and has a long list of complications. He had been receiving dialysis three times a week for almost two years for kidney failure and was told he would no longer be eligible for a transplant due to related vascular problems.

"We had little hope that he would be here this Christmas.

"Three months ago, he was put back on the list for a transplant as his condition seemed somewhat less severe. But deep down, no one believed he would be here to get it.

"On November 8, Jeff went to Hamilton General Hospital for some routine work-up tests related to the transplant. He was getting ready to come home to Burlington when he was told the transplant coordinator wanted to see him first. When she arrived, she asked if he was 'ready.' Perplexed, he asked what other test he was supposed to have. 'No, not another test,' she said. 'We have some organs coming in for you....'

"After being momentarily stunned by the news, we headed to Toronto.

"About 8 pm, they wheeled Jeff into the operating room" for this incredible operation.

"During the 7½-hour surgery, we paced the waiting room and spent time with Salemi's amazing family, everyone making nervous "chit-chat," and trying to appear somewhat confident. It is amazing how close you can feel to people you've never met when you're going through something so similar and terrifying.

"Finally, the long-awaited news that everything had gone OK.

"My brother is doing very well so far with his new lease on life. It's a whole new regime with endless supplies of pills, but not the needles he's needed to survive for the last 33 years.

"It truly a miracle, this gift of life, and my whole family thanks God for it every day.

"We all have a long road ahead of us, especially Jeff, but the road will seem much shorter than if my brother had not been here to celebrate this Christmas with us.

"I beg everyone to sign his/her donor card and, most importantly, to let family members know. The donor who helped Louise Salemi and my brother saved three other lives as well"—a total of five.

"Most importantly, from the bottom of my heart and those of my family, I thank the family of this donor—whichever you are.

"I can't begin to imagine how hard it must be to make such a decision, to give selflessly the gift of life to so many desperate people whom they've never met.

"I offer my deepest sympathy for their loss and hope they take comfort in knowing that, every day, Jeff and

everyone in our family think of them and thank God for their kindness.”

“Kim Smith, Grimsby.”

As we approach the holiday season, the season of gift giving, we need only look to our hearts and minds to realize the priceless gift we can so readily give. That's why I strongly urge all members of the Legislature to support the swift passage of this bill that can give this gift of life to so many more other Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This evening we're going to be debating four bills, including this bill. There's been an agreement among the House leaders and the parties that the speeches be limited to 10 minutes each on each of the four bills and that there be no comments and questions. I seek unanimous consent for that procedure to go forward.

The Acting Speaker: Just for clarification, that's Bill 142, Bill 133, Bill 114 and Bill 101. Is there consent? It is agreed.

Further debate?

1840

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to a very important bill. I would like to commend the work of the advisory board, chaired by Don Cherry. We all appreciate how important it is, when members of our family are ill, to understand that our government has done all it possibly can to ensure that we have the resources available to make them well again.

My family are very close friends with three individuals who have been blessed to have received transplants. One lady has received a liver. She is the mother of six and grandmother of—I'm not sure—three or four youngsters. Another individual is a young man who is a husband and the father of two. Another is a very fine young man. All of them are from my home of Tweed, Ontario, so I can certainly speak to how delighted a community is when we know that people who are not very healthy and need an organ are able to get it.

I think it's important to tell a story about a lady from my riding. One year ago—it was right at Christmas-time—she was on the waiting list to receive a liver. In my community, the hospital facility that had been providing some services to her and had been monitoring her health condition was Kingston. However, the hospital that was to perform the surgery was Mount Sinai here in Toronto.

In December of last year, my constituent was in the intensive care unit at Kingston General Hospital and received the good news that a liver compatible to her had been found. But the family also came to understand that there was not an intensive care unit bed available to which she could be transferred in the only hospital where the surgery could be performed.

The family were very anxious, as you can imagine. They had waited and waited for their loved one to get a liver that would be compatible for her. This constituent is a wife and mother and had endured great suffering with her condition. They contacted me to see if there was any avenue they were not aware of that they should pursue so this loved one could get to an intensive care unit bed in Toronto and get that liver transplant. As we know, with organ transplants, time is of the essence. These harvested organs just don't last forever. There is a very small window of opportunity.

Time passed, there was no bed available and my constituent missed the opportunity for the transplant. Sadly, in the spring of the year 2000, my constituent passed away—a very great sadness for the family and for our community. The other sadness too is that the organ was lost. It was wasted.

Certainly, I support this legislation, but I bring this story to this room today so the members of the government understand that if we are going to put in place laws that will make organs more readily available for the people who need them, let's make sure we also have the supports in place so that the organs aren't wasted and people in the province get the operations they need so they can live.

I support this bill, but I implore you to address the critical situation in our hospitals: the backlogs and the blockages. Please do that so people like my constituent don't miss those once-in-a-lifetime chances, as my constituent did.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I rise to speak in favour of the legislation, Bill 142, An Act to amend the Human Tissue Gift Act. As members of the Legislature have indicated this evening, every one of us knows someone who has been the recipient of a donated organ or tissue of some kind which has benefited that person immensely in terms of their personal health. We're probably all aware as well of people who have passed away as a result of not having that opportunity, and although we hate to speak of this issue on many occasions, we know of the lost opportunities that were there.

The most traumatic experience has to be the loss of a loved one in the family, particularly a younger person in the family, because younger people are normally in the best position to have the organs that are of benefit to others. It's a difficult subject to speak about, particularly when people are in a very bad emotional state, but we want to make it possible, in every possible way, for people to donate organs and allow others to carry on their lives in a somewhat normal fashion.

It's important as well, as other members have indicated, that we have not only the communications network there but that we have the facilities available in the hospital to undertake these operations. There are people who simply would not live, and while there are many organs that can be donated, including the heart, lungs, liver, pancreas, kidneys and so on—it makes me think of St Catharines and the Hotel Dieu Hospital, which has a kidney dialysis unit. This is a sidebar to this issue, but

unfortunately that unit is going to be moved out of Hotel Dieu Hospital to another hospital if the Ministry of Health has its way. I hope that decision is not made.

I want to emphasize that the people who are in that unit are very often, almost always in fact, people who would like to have a kidney transplant so they could live a life that would be much more normal than the life they experience at the present time. In order for the public to benefit from any increase in the donation rates, it is critical that adequate resources be in place in the hospital system to carry out those needed surgeries.

We have heard occasionally of organs being lost as a result of lack of surgical beds or operating room time. I think all of us in this House consider it a tragedy when that happens.

There is the issue of the donor card and what takes precedence—whether the family wants this or the donor wants it. It's important for all of us to sign that donor card, to give a clear indication not only to our families but to medical authorities that we wish to have organs donated in case of an accident, or in case a person is passing away for another reason and the organs can be used for others.

Many of us in this House will recall, as youngsters, the first heart transplant by Dr Christian Barnard from South Africa and how that was quite a medical feat at the time. We've seen major advances at the present time that allow people to live for far more years as a result of those organ transplants.

I know right here in the city of Toronto we have some spectacular situations that exist. Dr Joel Cooper was a professor at the U of T, because he taught medicine, but he was also at the Toronto General Hospital. Dr Cooper is now in the United States, I believe in St Louis, and I heard recently he had developed a new treatment for emphysema. Dr Cooper was the person who did the combined lung and heart transplant.

What we considered small steps in the very beginning are now major steps. People can live for far more years and live a somewhat normal life simply by having the organs of others, but what is essential is getting the rate of donation up. That is a difficult thing to do, but I think this legislation goes a significant way to help that to happen.

It's nice to be able to rise in the House from time to time to support government legislation. Those of us in the opposition are often opposed to government legislation. This is something I suspect will have the support of all members of this House. I notice the Minister of Health is here. She will be delighted when this bill is passed and we can see an even more favourable rate of organ donation and transplant taking place in Ontario.

1850

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm pleased to participate in the debate this evening and in the others that will follow. The reason I am participating with respect to this particular bill is because I want to take a moment to thank and congratulate my colleague from Beaches-East York, who actually had the first bill in this

House with respect to this particular issue. I regret that in the spirit of Christmas this evening the parliamentary assistant didn't make reference to that, nor did the minister on the day this was introduced. I regret that because it is a good idea, and it still is a good idea if an opposition member was the first one to have it and the first one to present it.

I think members should know, and the public watching tonight, that indeed in May of this year Ms Lankin, my colleague from Beaches-East York, did introduce a private member's bill called the Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act, which later became referenced as Bill 82. The details in that bill are very much the same as the details in the bill we are passing tonight. In fact, that bill sought to accomplish what the government is going to accomplish in its own government bill: the establishment of a routine referral system and an organization to organize and monitor that.

It is true that bill was never debated in this House, because my colleague chose instead to use her private member's hour to debate another bill which was very important to her because her mother has been directly affected by this. That was a bill with respect to limiting the use of restraints in acute care hospitals in this province. But the fact of the matter is that she certainly did some months ago introduce a private member's bill before the government did, and here we are today.

She wanted me as well to express her thanks to the members of the advisory committee tonight because, in the drafting that was done on her private member's bill, she had the opportunity to meet with members and discuss with them at great length what she wanted to do and get their reaction to it. She was able to do that with a number of other organizations that were also supportive of both bills. She certainly appreciated the co-operation she received from them during the course of the time that her bill was being drafted and believes, as they do, that the government bill that now replaces hers will in fact achieve what she wanted to do and achieve, frankly, what the whole advisory committee wanted to do as well.

At the time Ms Lankin introduced her bill, she made reference to a number of other jurisdictions that had utilized the same kind of legislation to point out how successful this legislation could be if and once it was passed in so many of these jurisdictions. Because it has not been mentioned here this evening, I would also read into the record again some of the success that has been achieved in other jurisdictions as a consequence of other governments moving in the direction we are going in now. Pennsylvania, for example, implemented a system of universal referral and training and has in that regard seen a 45% increase in suitable potential organ donor referrals, a 26% increase in organ donations and a 50% increase in organ transplants. It's worth noting that in Pennsylvania those tremendous increases in all three areas occurred within only three years after the bill had actually been passed. That has the highest success rate in any of the states in the United States. It's one of the highest in the world. Those rates, regrettably, are twice

the average of Canada's. We certainly hope the changes in our jurisdiction will have us much more closely reflect the changes we've now seen in Pennsylvania.

We know as well that North Carolina passed its legislation in October 1997 and that it experienced an increase in transplants as well of approximately 50%. Our colleagues in British Columbia have also recently implemented universal referral and training legislation and we hope they will see similar improvements. Other jurisdictions have moved in the same way. Similar legislation has been introduced or passed in Arizona, New Jersey, New York, Maryland, Tennessee and Illinois. So, clearly, any number of jurisdictions are looking at what has actually happened with respect to Pennsylvania and have made a conscious decision to move that way because they know so many people who are desperately in need of help will get it through this legislation.

In conclusion, let me say that of course we are going to support the bill before us because it very much reflects a similar private member's bill that was put forth by a member of our caucus, Ms Lankin. She's certainly pleased with the co-operation she received from the advisory committee and knows the bill will work, knows that it has in other jurisdictions where it was passed. We continue to be very happy to work with the government in any way, shape or form to ensure that the organization as it is set up performs in a way that will lead us to the success that I know we all want to achieve.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? No?

Mr Clark has moved third reading of Bill 142. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the motion do now carry and be entitled as in the bill.

House in committee of the whole.

IMITATION FIREARMS REGULATION ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA RÉGLEMENTATION DES FAUSSES ARMES À FEU

Consideration of Bill 133, An Act to regulate the sale of imitation firearms / Projet de loi 133, Loi visant à réglementer la vente des fausses armes à feu.

The Second Deputy Chair (Mr Bert Johnson): Are there any amendments to the bill? If so, which sections?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): The government has amendments to sections 4 and 6.

The Second Deputy Chair: Shall sections 1 to 3 carry? Carried.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I move that subsection 4(2) of the bill be struck out and the following substituted:

"Exception

"(2) Subsection (1) does not apply with respect to a temporary transfer of an imitation firearm to an individual to permit the individual to use the imitation firearm on the business premises or in an area that is under the control of the business."

The Second Deputy Chair: Debate? All in favour of that amendment? It is agreed.

Shall section 4, as amended, carry? Carried.

Shall section 5 carry? Carried.

We're coming to section 6.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I move that subsection 6(2) of the bill be struck out and the following substituted:

"Same

"(2) Sections 3 and 4 come into force on the day that is 90 days after the day this act receives royal assent."

The Second Deputy Chair: Debate? All those in favour of the amendment? Carried.

Shall section 6, as amended, carry? Carried.

Shall section 7 carry? Carried.

Shall the title carry? Carried.

Shall the bill, as amended, carry? Carried.

Shall I report the bill, as amended, to the House? Agreed.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): I move the committee rise and report.

The Second Deputy Chair: All agreed? It is agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The committee of the whole House begs to report one bill with certain amendments and asks for leave to sit again. Shall the report be received and adopted? Is it agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: Notwithstanding standing order 77(b), I seek unanimous consent to move third reading of Bill 133 and that the bill proceed with respect that it hasn't been reprinted with the amendments.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? It is agreed.

1900

IMITATION FIREARMS REGULATION ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA RÉGLEMENTATION DES FAUSSES ARMES À FEU

Mr Tsubouchi moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to regulate the sale of imitation firearms / Projet de loi 133, Loi visant à réglementer la vente des fausses armes à feu.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Our government is introducing this bill, which regulates the sale and purchase of imitation handguns and convertible starter pistols, as another step in keeping our promise to make communities safer.

We have listened to the concerns expressed by the police and our fellow citizens about the dangers of imitation guns circulating unchecked on the streets of our cities, and we're responding to those concerns. Too many innocent citizens are being endangered and intimidated by these look-alike weapons. This legislation is part of our ongoing efforts to rid Ontario streets of imitation handguns.

Imitation guns are a public safety issue that is growing. Earlier this year, the Peel police seized more than 3,000 imitation guns from an Oakville toy store. Those guns could have been used in robberies or public intimidation. Just think of it: 3,000 imitation guns seized from just one store. But how many other stores in this province are selling realistic imitation guns? How many more people would be intimidated by these devices? We couldn't let this problem go unchecked any longer.

When someone has what appears to be an authentic weapon, the police respond the way they're trained to respond. They must assume it's a real gun and act accordingly. In many cases these phony weapons look identical and bear the brand names of real weapons. They pose a threat to police and innocent people.

The numbers don't lie. More than 40% of guns seized by police are imitations. The provincial weapons enforcement unit estimates that approximately 700 such devices will be seized in the city of Toronto this year. This is up from the 600 seized just two years ago. Furthermore, another investigation by the unit revealed many examples of people buying starter pistols and converting them into firing live rounds.

The provincial weapons enforcement unit was formed in response to the growing problem of violent incidents involving firearms in Ontario. This unit is the only one of its kind in Canada and works with the OPP, the RCMP, Canada Customs, the Department of National Defence and police services across the province to investigate and confiscate illegal weaponry in Ontario. This legislation will give the unit additional strength in removing illegal weaponry and imitation firearms from the streets.

We have support for this initiative from police services throughout the province. We have support from the general public, who have asked us for a solution to this problem. All of them recognize the need for legislation.

We had a dramatic demonstration of the problem with starter pistols that can be converted to fire real ammunition last year. A person committed suicide in the back seat of a police cruiser using a modified starter pistol. This is just one example of how imitation guns can kill.

Our government studied the current federal legislation regulating some types of imitation guns. We found its definition is too vague and excludes many devices that are currently causing dangerous situations with police and citizens. We drafted this legislation to assist our front-line police officers because the federal definition of replica guns is confusing.

Current replica gun definitions under the Criminal Code and Firearms Act don't go far enough, and frankly they fail to safeguard adequately our police and our communities. The private member's bill introduced earlier on this year referred to "replica guns," which would have been regulated under the federal statutes, and the federal statutes are a little confusing. That's why we're introducing legislation with three important objectives: first, to ban the sale, purchase, transfer or receipt of starter pistols that can be converted to fire live ammunition; secondly, to make it an offence for commercial vendors

to sell, lease or otherwise transfer a deactivated or imitation firearm to anyone under the age of 18; thirdly, to make it an offence for anyone younger than 18 years old to buy a deactivated firearm.

This legislation also requires vendors to check photo ID for proof of age of purchasers and provides for fines of up to \$50,000 and forfeiture for non-compliance. This legislation has been drafted very carefully, I believe, and after careful consideration and consultation with our policing community and others with an interest in this issue. We will continue to monitor the situation. If we find that the situation needs tougher measures, we won't fail to act on that.

As an example, unless you are a collector, there's no legitimate reason for you to have a deactivated firearm. Otherwise, its only purpose is probably to terrify or intimidate law-abiding citizens in this province. Your families need this legislation as much as mine does, and this legislation is necessary to protect all Ontarians.

Imitation guns are a threat to law-abiding citizens, and that's why this legislation is so important. We need it to reduce the number of such devices on the streets and to make them harder to buy and transfer.

If approved, Ontario will be the first Canadian province to introduce and approve this type of legislation to improve community safety.

I thank all members in this House for their support throughout the process of this legislation. It will in fact, at the end of the day, protect our police and our communities.

If the Legislature approves this bill, as I hope it will, we will take one more step toward making Ontario a safer place to live, work and raise a family.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I appreciate the comments from the Solicitor General. I just want to address something that he mentioned right off the bat, and that's with respect to Bill 67. Let me go back to the chronology. He mentioned that Bill 67 made reference to the use of replica guns and that because the phrase "replica guns" is used also in the Criminal Code provision, somehow that creates a constitutional problem. But as the Solicitor General knows very well, and he certainly would have been advised by the Attorney General to this effect, that same provision in the Criminal Code that refers to replica guns also refers to imitation guns and imitation firearms. Of course, that's exactly what the title of this bill is.

The suggestion that somehow using a word that's also used in the Criminal Code would make a bill unconstitutional is preposterous, of course. But that's the political game that has to be played in order for the government to fulfil its mandate as, when it comes to crime, the official opposition to the official opposition. More on that later.

Let's be real here for a moment and talk about the chronology of this law. Let me start at the very end. I am happy that this law is passing, as we all are in this House. It's a good moment for victims, it's a good moment for police, because it means that the day is soon going to come—it's going to be about 90 days after royal assent is

provided—whereby people can't buy these phony guns like candy from a corner store. But that's the way it works right now.

1910

Around March of last year I was in a hardware store and I saw a couple buying one of these imitation guns, what I call phony guns, air guns, BB guns, pellet guns, starter pistols. They were quite specifically looking for the imitation gun that looked the most like an imitation gun. They said, "No, I think this one looks more like a gun," and they took it from behind the counter and then they grabbed their diaper bag and went up to the cashier, and they purchased them at the same time. I thought, how can this be? Can anybody buy one of these? So I asked the hardware store attendant, and he said: "There's no problem. If you want to buy the ammunition for the guns, you've got to fill out a form. But if you want to buy the guns themselves, go ahead and buy the guns."

This struck me as incredible. I thought maybe there was a mistake. We looked into the laws. Sure enough, the province of Ontario does regulate the sale of ammunition for these BB guns, pellet guns and air guns, but they weren't regulating the imitation weapons themselves, so we had an opening. Then I found out that in fact these are really the weapon of choice, the cheap weapon of choice, I guess, for criminals today in Ontario. At certain times in the last 10 years, there have been more of these phony guns picked up by the police in Toronto than handguns. Can you believe it: more of these guns than handguns? So these are a real problem: 40% of the weapons picked up in Toronto and Ottawa are these phony guns. The number's around 25% in Hamilton and Windsor. So now we've got a real problem.

Coming up we have, not too long from now, January 1, the anniversary of the shooting death of a man at St Mike's hospital here in Toronto. He had one of these phony guns. The police officer saw him with a phony gun and shot him dead. These are the kinds of tragedies and nightmares that I know police officers—it's probably their worst nightmare, that they would be involved in a shooting incident in which the other person, who they thought had a gun, didn't have a gun.

They build these guns to look like real guns. I got unanimous consent from the House, and I appreciate that, during the debate on the phony gun bill, Bill 67, to show these weapons in the House. So unlike Dr Shulman, who pulled out a weapon without any authorization, I pulled it out with unanimous consent. The barrel of these guns—they look like real guns. Police officers can recognize that right away. I spoke to bank tellers who called me up and told me they've had one of these things pointed at them—just a nightmare. The starter pistols can easily be hollowed out to be transformed into a real firearm. What a nightmare. Thousands of these things, as the Solicitor General mentioned, were being sold in various gun shops around Ontario and in Montreal. As I've said before, there just aren't that many track meets in Toronto to justify the sale of that many starter guns.

So I proposed on April 12 a private member's bill in this House, Bill 67, which would regulate the sale of the guns. It would have gone much further than this bill, but the point was still there. The point was to crack down on the proliferation of these phony guns, what the government calls imitation guns and what I would call imitation guns too. At the time, the Solicitor General, the same Solicitor General who rose today and made passing reference to Bill 67 introduced by the Ontario Liberals, the same Solicitor General walked outside of this House, when faced with the prospect of this bill, knowing that in effect it had been introduced earlier in the day, and without blinking said, "No, no, we can't support that." He said it was a federal problem. "The feds aren't doing enough," said the Solicitor General. The Attorney General walked outside of the House and said the same thing: it's a problem with the Young Offenders Act.

My first reaction was, "Wow, this government really doesn't get it." This isn't a young offender issue; this is an issue that goes far beyond that of youth crime, although obviously if it's the cheap gun of choice for criminals, that's going to include both young offenders and adult offenders. But the real reason, of course, that they rejected the idea was because it came from the official opposition.

That leads me to this conclusion, and one can only draw this conclusion, because they are now introducing their own bill: we've got to the point in our parliamentary system and in our political system today where the government of the day doesn't feel it is in any way acceptable that an opposition private member's bill passes on an issue that enters into what they perceive as a mandate that they have a monopoly over. They don't have a monopoly over issues of law and order and they don't have a monopoly over issues of safety of our streets and safe neighbourhoods. I'll be speaking to what Ontario Liberals have been doing during the debate on the Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act later on this evening.

But the problem with that, of course, is just this. Put aside the fact that instead of Bill 67 getting royal assent this bill gets passed. Here's the problem. We're not going to have enforcement of this for 90 days. Bill 67, after it was introduced on April 12, was immediately rejected by the justice ministers. The next day the Premier of Ontario's political antenna was in tune to the fact that chiefs of police from Hamilton and Ottawa, Chief Fantino in Toronto, the Canada Safety Council, the Ontario Provincial Police Association, all of these people and more supported my phony gun bill, Bill 67. So the Premier said, "You know what? This is a good idea." Not only that, but everybody from the Toronto Sun to the Toronto Star also endorsed the bill, so the Premier said he supported it.

Suddenly we had a situation where Bill 67 passed unanimously in June, obviously a good moment for the victims of crime and for police who face these terrors all the time in Toronto and Ottawa and all over Ontario. But instead of taking it to committee and addressing the

concerns they might have had and getting it passed when the House first came back, they played this political game where they reinvented the wheel, repackaged it and introduced it, and it's passing now.

What's tragic about that, and I mean this, is that with this kind of bill it means that weeks or months—depending on how long it takes to get enforced, it may be half a year to a year, months of delay, before a law passes, the sole purpose of which is to protect the people. This isn't about crackdowns and reacting to crime after the fact, which is all this government does. My bill is about preventing these phony guns from getting into the hands of criminals, and sadly, by playing this political game, Bill 67 was never passed as amended. Instead, we had to wait months for photo ops and press conferences and this process whereby we had three readings. We've already had two readings of Bill 67. We could have taken it to committee and fixed it.

That said, I think we have to enjoy a good moment. I hope the people of St Paul's, and I know the people of Toronto and across Ontario, are going to be safer because of this law. For that reason, obviously, we're supporting a law that we originally introduced. It's a good day for victims, a good day for police. In an unfortunate, broken, imperfect way, I think it is a pretty good day for the Legislature as well.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to begin by referring back to the comments that were made by the Solicitor General. He began his opening remarks by saying that this bill is being set forward to regulate the sale of imitation firearms, with an emphasis on the words "regulate the sale of." He then went on to describe to all of us in the House and to those watching tonight the really horrendous statistics about how many of these imitation firearms, replica guns, have been seized not only in Toronto but in any number of other communities. He talked about the horrendous numbers with respect to the conversion of starter pistols into deadly weapons and how much of that occurs. He talked about the proliferation of these weapons and how the government wants to respond by bringing forward this bill to deal with the situation.

When I listen to all of that, I say to myself, why doesn't the government do the really logical thing? If they really want to deal with the proliferation of imitation firearms, then just ban them altogether. I don't think we should be here tonight talking about how we regulate the sale of imitation firearms. I think we should be here dealing with a bill that bans them altogether in Ontario. If we did that, then we would really get at the problem of the proliferation of these weapons and we would really get at the problem that our police face now, which is having to guess and second-guess if that pistol in someone's hand is real or is imitation. I don't think we should be putting our police in that position, and the government tonight clearly could have been moving a bill that didn't put them in that position any more.

1920

I want to go back to some of the comments my colleague Peter Kormos made on the second reading debate of this bill because the government would leave you with the impression this evening that as a result of passage of this bill we're going to somehow protect police and protect victims because these imitation firearms aren't going to be sold to people 18 or under and that's somehow going to resolve the problem.

My colleague Mr Kormos raised three cases that occurred just in the fall session, since the government introduced this bill, two of them on Halloween and one a few weeks later. Those three cases involved adults who had imitation firearms, in two of the cases for the purposes of part of a costume for Halloween. The day after Halloween there was an article in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record that said we could have had a tragedy on our hands. "It ended up being a toy gun, but Constable Scott didn't know that when he was confronted by an armed man in the dark of night."

This is a quote from the article: "It is only by the grace of God this guy wasn't killed that night because the officer had every reason in the world to shoot," said the head of the detective branch of Waterloo Regional Police, because he thought it was a real gun and it wasn't. It was part of a costume for Halloween, but it was being brandished about by a 52-year-old. Where do we resolve the problem of the proliferation of replica guns or imitation firearms by prohibiting the sale to 18-year-olds? This guy's 52 and he's using one as part of a Halloween costume. He's lucky he didn't get his head blown off in the process.

A similar incident, Halloween this year, Victoria, British Columbia: A gentleman who worked at Chapters was costumed for Halloween. I guess they decided it would be a good idea if their staff came in dressed appropriately on that evening. But as he was going to work, he was dressed up in a Darth Vader type of costume. Some passerby saw the holster with the firearm in it, called the police, the SWAT team came in, took the guy down, as they should have, and discovered it was an imitation firearm. Now, we're lucky no one was firing. We're lucky the police didn't second-guess and decide not to take a chance and actually fire. There might have been an innocent passerby between the police and the gentleman in the Darth Vader costume and someone else might have ended up getting killed. This guy was 24 years old. The government bill that bans the sale to those 18 or under does nothing to deal with this situation. Again, we're lucky someone didn't get killed.

But a third incident that my colleague from Welland-Thorold related during his remarks on this bill did involve someone who got killed. The same thing again, this time an actor at a Halloween party. As part of the costume he was holding an imitation gun. The police were called to the event, they saw him with the imitation gun in his hand, they shot him and he was killed. This person was 39 years old, clearly not a minor who should not have possessed an imitation gun but an adult who

was using it for—I don't want to say "recreation purposes"; that's the wrong word—but using it for purposes that have nothing to do with wanting to break the law, and still ended up dead because the police didn't take a chance, didn't second-guess. They fired.

We shouldn't be putting police officers in that position. That's the point I'm trying to make here tonight. Frankly, that's the point that I think Peterborough Chief of Police Terry McLaren said. He was asked about this bill in their newspaper called the *Examiner* and he said the following: "I support the introduction of the bill and for making the possession of replicas for people under the age of 18 an offence.... I think it's a step in the right direction, but I don't know if it's enough." He said, even with the ban, if some people are bound and determined to get a replica handgun they can probably get one. He also told the newspaper that he was very "concerned the legislation won't prevent adults from buying imitations, because there are adults who use the fakes to commit crimes as well."

So you've got a problem: adults who purchase an imitation gun, not for the purpose of committing a crime, but who could potentially end up getting shot, and who did in the case that was related by my colleague from Welland-Thorold; you've got adults who do use it for the purposes of a crime and end up being shot; and you've got adults who can purchase imitation guns and give them to people under 18 because the bill doesn't prohibit that. Then you've got the problem of youngsters playing in the streets with imitation guns, the police being called and having to second-guess whether or not you've got something real and whether or not they're going to respond in an effort to take those kids down if they feel they are having to act in self-defence.

There's the chief of police in Peterborough saying it's a step in the right direction but it certainly doesn't resolve what is going to be an ongoing problem even when this bill is passed; that is, adults getting imitation guns for the purposes of committing crimes, adults getting imitation guns not to commit a crime and still being put at risk and putting police at risk and putting other members of the public at risk, and adults being able to purchase replica handguns and giving them to kids, the same group the government is trying to ban through a sale at a store, because there is nothing in this bill that prohibits an adult from purchasing one of these things and giving it to a child or a minor.

I think my colleague from Welland-Thorold was absolutely correct when he said the problem with the legislation is that it does "nothing to remove these imitation firearms from our communities," and that is a fact. It might ban the sale from a particular segment of the population. It doesn't stop them from getting replica guns at the end of the day and it doesn't stop adults from having access to them. He said, "We've got to do it"—ban replica firearms—"to protect the community and to protect the police. We've got to get rid of them. It's as simple as that."

He's right, because we shouldn't be putting police officers in the position of having to guess and then second-guess if they're dealing with the real thing or not. If we ban replica handguns in the community, the police won't have to second-guess any more. They will know if they are facing something that looks like a gun and that it can injure someone, then it probably is capable of injuring someone, and then they will be in a position to rely upon the law in terms of protecting themselves and protecting the public, and they can take all the appropriate actions that have to be taken to do just that.

I say in conclusion, if the minister really wanted to do something about the horrendous statistics he talked about, if he really wanted to do something to protect the police and the public, he would ban replica handguns altogether in Ontario.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know we have an agreement in terms of time and I know that the Solicitor General only used about six minutes of the 10 minutes. I'd just ask for consent to speak for a couple of minutes on this bill.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sterling: We've only used six minutes.

The Acting Speaker: Is there consent? It is agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I want to speak about this bill in the context of this Legislature and some of the experience I've had here. I just want to encourage members of the opposition to bring forward ideas that have merit, ideas that can be carried to fruition.

I want to congratulate Mr Bryant in terms of bringing forward the idea to deal with imitation guns. In the past, I guess governments have been afraid to adopt some of the good ideas that have been brought forward by the opposition. While the opposition may complain the government has co-opted this idea and brought it forward, the other part of a private member's bill has been in the past that the public have not really expected private members' bills to actually become law, and therefore the consultation process, the expectations haven't been there.

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I think we're going through a period of transition and I would encourage members of the opposition to continue to bring forward ideas which can in fact be put into law. I think that governments, whether they be our government or a future government, should not be afraid to take an idea which has been brought up on the opposition benches and perhaps improve upon it, make certain that all of the t's are crossed, the i's are dotted, that the stakeholders who are involved in it have been consulted with, and then put the bill into law. This is perhaps one of those cases where in fact this has happened.

I look at this not only as a matter of strength from the position of the member who brought this forward; I think it's important for all members of the Legislature to understand it's a point of strength also in terms of the government side saying, "We won't just reject this idea out of hand. We will say yes, there is a good idea. We

will bring this on, we will pass this law and it will be good for all the people of Ontario."

The bottom line over the long period of time that I and my friend Mr Bradley have served here, since 1977, is what really counts: that you keep moving the yardsticks forward and that you improve our laws and improve the situation for all the people of Ontario. I think that's what we're doing here tonight.

I want to congratulate Mr Bryant and I also want to congratulate the Solicitor General in that we actually brought this thing to fruition and we passed a law, and the people of Ontario are going to be the benefactors of it.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Tsubouchi has moved third reading of Bill 133. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

VICTIMS' BILL OF RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA CHARTE DES DROITS DES VICTIMES D'ACTES CRIMINELS

Mr Flaherty moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Victims' Bill of Rights, 1995 / Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Charte de 1995 des droits des victimes d'actes criminels.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'm pleased to be here to participate in the debate on Bill 114, the Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act. The purpose of this bill is to establish permanently an Office for Victims of Crime in Ontario. This agency would serve and represent victims of crime in Ontario. Bill 114 is an essential part of our government's commitment to help victims of crime.

In the Blueprint we committed to supporting victims and providing the services they need, and we committed to create a permanent Office for Victims of Crime. We reaffirmed our commitment to victims with our budget promise of \$1 million to establish permanently the Office for Victims of Crime.

Victims of crime do not choose to participate in the criminal justice system. It is inflicted on them by the criminal actions of others. We know that victims of crime need services to assist them in coping with very traumatizing experiences. That is why, in tandem with our efforts to create safer communities, our government is also addressing the concerns of those who find themselves in the terrible position of being victims of crime. Victims must have a voice and they must be heard, and we are listening.

As part of our commitment, we have created and expanded community-based services for victims of crime; created and expanded the domestic violence court program in Ontario; and allocated funding to support victims of domestic violence and their children. We established

the Office for Victims of Crime to consult with victims and victims' service providers and report on the state of victims' services in Ontario.

In June of this year the office released its report entitled *A Voice for Victims*. A number of recommendations were made in this report. This legislation is an important step in addressing these recommendations.

It is time for the Office for Victims of Crime to take on a permanent role in supporting and assisting victims. It is time for an advisory agency that understands victims' issues and is sensitive to the circumstances that victims find themselves facing.

A permanent Office for Victims of Crime would provide advice to government on a number of matters: ways to ensure that the principles in the Victims' Bill of Rights are respected; the development, implementation and maintenance of provincial standards for services for victims of crime; the use of the victims' justice fund to provide improved services for victims of crime; research and education on the treatment of victims of crime and ways to prevent further victimization; and matters of legislation and policy on the treatment of victims of crime and on the prevention of further victimization.

If the bill is passed, the Attorney General would be able to assign special tasks to the Office for Victims of Crime. Its extensive mandate would allow the office to provide up-to-date, informed advice to government that reflects the needs and concerns of victims of crime.

Mr Scott Newark, who is the special counsel at the Office for Victims of Crime, has been a major force in advancing the cause of victims and the Office for Victims of Crime in Ontario. He's here in the public gallery tonight with Detective Sergeant John Muise and others from the Office For Victims of Crime: Fatima Ferreira and Suzanne Dias. I welcome them to the public gallery.

The first Office for Victims of Crime in Canada was established here in Ontario in November 1998. At that time the organization was mandated to consult with service providers across Ontario to assess the state of victims' services in the province. The office fulfilled this mandate when it submitted its report entitled *A Voice for Victims* in June this year, but there is still much that remains to be done.

There is a need for an agency to advocate on behalf of victims to try to create a balance between the rights of accused persons, which are quite properly advocated in our courts, with the rights of victims of crime to make sure that victims have a voice. There is a need for an organization to provide informed advice to government on issues relevant to victims. There is a need for an independent agency to ensure that the spirit and intention of the Victims' Bill of Rights are respected. A permanent Office for Victims of Crime would meet these needs.

With respect to victims, we have taken some important steps in this legislative session, not only with this Bill 114 but with respect to victims of domestic violence in Bill 117, the Domestic Violence Protection Act, which received third reading earlier this week, and with other bills that are before the House now for consideration:

Bill 155, An Act to provide civil remedies for organized crime and other unlawful activities; Bill 168, An Act to protect victims by prohibiting profiting from recounting of crime; and the bill that was introduced in the House yesterday, which I believe is now Bill 176, dealing with the victimization of children in this province by pimps and johns exploiting children in child prostitution.

All of these measures brought by our government to this House this session are designed to provide what protections can be provided and to reinforce our commitment to victims of crime, both children and adults, in Ontario. In addition, when children are obliged, which regrettably they are from time to time, to give evidence in court as witnesses or victims, we have expanded the child-friendly courts in the province which make it easier—it's still difficult but it makes it easier—for children to give evidence in our courtrooms, whether they use monitors or are behind screens. Every new courthouse that we're building in the province includes child-friendly courts in the design.

In addition, we have of course been urging the federal government to repeal the Young Offenders Act for the very simple reason that the usual victims of violent crime perpetrated by young people are other young people. So our concern for victims requires that we encourage the federal government, within its area of jurisdiction in the Young Offenders Act, to take the steps it ought to take in order to protect other young people in Ontario from becoming victims of crime.

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Bill 114 is an important bill. It will permanently establish the Office for Victims of Crime for this government and for successive governments, one would hope, in the province. It will provide an expertise to government with respect to victims that government otherwise would not benefit from.

This legislation is one more step to help us achieve our overall goal of supporting victims. Every step we take moves us closer to creating a system that truly balances the rights of the victim with the rights of the accused. This legislation is important because it would enshrine the Office for Victims of Crime permanently in legislation. Making the office permanent is critical to ensuring that it will be able to continue work on behalf of victims.

We know there is still much more to be done on behalf of victims of crime in Ontario. We've taken a number of important steps during this legislative session, including this bill which is before the House now for third reading. We will continue to take action to help victims by creating the Office for Victims of Crime in Ontario permanently. We are reaffirming our dedication to victims of crime in this province. We cannot deny victims such an essential support, and I urge all members of all parties in this House to support this bill at third reading this evening.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I listened closely to the comments of the Attorney General because I wanted some indication that this bill was more than a missed opportunity, because this bill is a missed opportunity. We

support this bill. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals will support any step, however small, that advances the interests of victims in Ontario.

But let's look at this bill. It's in three sections. It's one of the smallest bills that has been passed this session; unfortunately there are a lot of bills like that. It represents and fulfills one recommendation out of 71 made by the Office for Victims of Crime in its report on victim services in Ontario, A Voice for Victims, which was released in June 2000—71 recommendations and but one has been fulfilled with this particular bill that's now being passed today.

As I said, we support it, but what of the other 70 recommendations? Would now not have been the time to try and address some of those? That opportunity was not taken advantage of. Moreover, the Office for Victims of Crime has a very important role to play, in my view, in terms of being a watchdog, on our judicial system, our criminal justice system. By that, I mean we have to make sure that prosecutors and judges and everybody involved in the criminal justice system understands that it's not just about, on the one hand, the accused and on the other hand the prosecutors. There's somebody else in our criminal justice system who is a player and who is an actor who is probably the most affected by the result, and that's the victim. So the Office for Victims of Crime must be a check and balance against the criminal justice system, which for many years ignored victims and as a result victims were revictimized. I would commend the report I just mentioned to everybody in the province to read. It has a very concise and compelling history of the victims' rights movement and where it came from and hopefully where we're going.

I think that the office as well ought to be a watchdog on government. I think the office should be able to say in an independent fashion that the current government of the day, whoever that government is, is not fulfilling its mandate on behalf of victims. So my great concern with this particular bill is that on the one hand it's a missed opportunity to fulfill all the promises that have been made to victims by this government and to fulfill the 71 recommendations put in the report, and on the other hand, the only thing it does is take an office that has been existing since 1998, obviously before the election, this mandate and this government, set up before this minister was in place, and makes it a permanent office. Fine. That's true; it can't be eliminated by regulation. But what government would get rid of an Office for Victims of Crime? In any event, it was still a recommendation of the office and we accept that.

My only concern is that the one thing that has been done with this bill may actually potentially dilute their independence. It's important that they're independent, it's important that they not just be the patsy of the government of the day, whatever that government is, that they be able to speak out against the government of the day. They're subsumed within the Ministry of the Attorney General. If you work under the Ministry of the Attorney General, it's not going to be easy to be critical of your

boss. So whatever independent means by which we can fight for victims' rights, I think we need to do this.

I'm glad that some champions of victims' rights who work in this office every day for victims are here. I welcome you here on behalf of the official opposition and I thank you for everything you are doing and trying to do. I can tell you that what we're going to try to do on this side of the House is make sure that these recommendations in fact come to fruition. I hope we don't have to have 70 different bills, one for each recommendation. I fear that what we may have is what has been, I'm sorry to report to you, consistent certainly from the day that I was elected. When it comes to victims' rights and when it comes to crime generally, this government has got a lot to say about it, but in terms of the concrete results, my fear is that more often than not the government is all talk, no action.

So you say, "Fine, official opposition, you're fulfilling your role as the official opposition in being critical of the government. So what have Ontario Liberals done for victims of crime?" Let's just talk about what has happened in the last legislative session alone. Bill 67, a bill that cracks down on imitation firearms, is becoming a law today. That's a good thing for victims of crime and it's a good thing for police. These things are nightmares for victims.

Grandview survivors, one of the saddest and most tragic tales in the history of our province, the Grandview survivors, the ultimate victims who were revictimized, found themselves in the last year going through a situation where they weren't getting the benefits they had been promised, or at least they were concerned that was the case. So we fought to make sure those victims in fact had the promise made by the government of Ontario involving something that obviously preceded this government and made sure that those promises were fulfilled.

Domestic violence: there's another report I would commend to the people of Ontario to read, and that is what I call the Baldwin committee report, the joint committee report on domestic violence that was submitted to this Attorney General in August of last year. It contains the holistic, full approach to try and help victims of domestic violence, not just dealing with victims of domestic violence once they get into the criminal justice system, which has to be addressed, obviously, but also the vast majority of victims of domestic violence who never call up the police, who never get involved in the criminal justice system; for right or for wrong they don't. So we need to help them. Again, that's all about prevention, not just about reacting afterwards.

Dalton McGuinty stood up in this House and called upon the Attorney General to provide the compensation due to the families of those victims in the OC Transpo tragedy. The Attorney General said no; the next day the Premier said yes, and we had a bill thanks to Dalton McGuinty.

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Of course, yesterday, we had introduced in this House the Bartolucci bill bonanza, a bill introduced by the

Attorney General. It takes not one, not two but three of the member for Sudbury's bills, at least components of them, and puts them into law.

I don't have enough time to go through all the things the Ontario Liberals have been doing: our five-point plan to crack down on gun violence; our four-point plan to crack down on organized crime; our efforts to assist victims of child pornography, victims of date-rape drugs, those who are victims of deadbeat grinchies and the Family Responsibility Office, victims of drunk driving. We called on the Attorney General to ensure that those victims saw a judicial system that ensured we got jail sentences.

Last, but certainly not least, our House leader, Mr Duncan, fought for Mr Montfortin. I know I've got a minute left, but I want to give him time to talk about the fight he has been fighting for the victims in his riding.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The Attorney General and I worked for more than a year to increase the lifetime maximum for victims of crime. The Attorney General could have responded last November; he could have responded last December or January or February or March or April; he could have responded in May; he could have responded in June, when Mr Montfortin's benefits ran out; he could have responded in July, August, September, October; he could have responded in November. We did finally get it in November. So I wanted to say to the Attorney General, thank you, on behalf of my constituent, for your efforts in making that the law of the province of Ontario.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to begin my remarks this evening on Bill 114 by referencing something the Attorney General said in his remarks.

Near the end of his remarks, he said this bill was so very important because we are going to enshrine the Office for Victims of Crime permanently in legislation. I say with all due respect to the Attorney General and the good people from the office who are here this evening, if you really wanted to do something for the victims of crime, you would enshrine statutory rights for victims in legislation in this province. This bill doesn't do anything like that, and we haven't seen anything from this government to do anything like that since the Premier made a commitment during the election of 1999 that he would fix the bill that had essentially been condemned by a superior justice as being meaningless and toothless when it came to protecting victims of crime.

I'm of course referring to the government's original Victims' Bill of Rights that the government passed in a previous mandate. It was passed with oh, so much fanfare and oh, so much promise to victims that finally victims would have enshrined in law their statutory rights, so they would not be victimized once by a perpetrator and victimized again by a court system that might not care about them.

It's probably worthwhile at this point to go back to what the former Attorney General said when he introduced the government's Victims' Bill of Rights. I want to take us back to second reading debate on Bill 23, which

occurred Wednesday, December 13, 1995. Mr Harnick was the Attorney General at the time who was bringing forward this oh, so wonderful legislation that was going to protect so many victims. Mr Harnick said the following—I want to quote him at little bit here this evening: “We introduced this bill for first reading but a couple of weeks ago and the basis upon which this was introduced was the fact that this government will not accept a system that allows victims of crime to suffer twice: first at the hands of the criminal and second under a justice system that does not respond to and respect victims’ needs.”

He went further: “This bill meets our commitments to Ontarians to bring forward a Victims’ Bill of Rights, something we promised during the last election campaign, and it’ll bring, we believe, meaningful change to the way victims are treated in the criminal justice system.”

One more quote from Charles Harnick during second reading debate for Bill 23, the Victims’ Bill of Rights, December 13, 1995: “We are taking action to restore justice, fairness and victims’ confidence in the justice system. The people of Ontario have demanded these changes and we are taking action.” Thank you, Charles.

What happened when the law, this government’s bill of rights that was going to stop the victimization of victims a second time, was actually tested in an Ontario court? Well, two very courageous women, Linda Even of Welland, who had been stabbed 18 times by her former common-law spouse, and Karen Vanscoy of St Catharines, who had a daughter murdered by a young offender, ended up taking the Ontario government to court because they felt their rights were violated when the crown attorneys involved in the two cases neglected to provide them with important information regarding the assailants’ court cases and the convictions. You see, these two women thought that when the government passed its Victims’ Bill of Rights it actually gave them some statutory rights, and they discovered, because of what the crown attorneys did, which led them to court, which led to a ruling by Chief Justice Gerald Day, that in fact they had no rights as victims. They had no rights, and any other person who thought they might be protected by this government’s Victims’ Bill of Rights didn’t have any either. Why was that?

I think the ruling that was made by Superior Court Justice Gerald Day in this particular case is very telling. It’s worth repeating in the House tonight as we’re dealing with a bill that supposedly—allegedly—is going to give some more rights to victims. Justice Gerald Day said the following in May 1999 in his ruling on the Ontario Victims’ Bill of Rights:

“I conclude that the Legislature did not intend for ... the Victims’ Bill of Rights to provide rights to the victims of crime. The act is a statement of principle and social policy, beguilingly clothed in the language of legislation. It does not establish any”—any—“statutory rights for the victims of crime.”

So much for all the pronouncements of the then Attorney General, Mr Charles Harnick. So much for all

the government’s rhetoric about how this bill was going to protect victims from being victimized twice. The Premier, when he was called to task about this by the media on the day the judgment was rendered by Gerald Day, said the government would fix its bill, would enshrine in legislation statutory rights, would make sure victims couldn’t be victimized yet again. Then the Premier repeated that promise during the election campaign of 1999, that at the earliest opportunity his government was going to bring in a bill that would protect victims, that would ensure that their rights would not be trampled on in court or anywhere else.

When this Attorney General introduced Bill 114 earlier this fall, some of us thought that this was the long-promised, long-awaited piece of legislation that was going to finally guarantee rights to victims, and oh, how wrong we have been shown to be, because this three-page bill, outside of permanently establishing the Office for Victims of Crime, which is a good thing, does absolutely nothing else to deal with victims of crime. It’s billed as an amendment to a victims of crime act that was allegedly passed in the first place to provide victims with some rights. That billing is such a failure. Anyone who listened to the Attorney General tonight who thought they might be getting some more statutory protection with this bill had better think again because there is nothing in this legislation to protect that. There is nothing in this legislation that remedies the terrible court ruling this government faced when the justice said this legislation has no meaning, it is toothless, it provides no rights, it’s a statement of policy. There’s nothing here that changes what has been in place since that ruling was made. That, despite the fact that on the day the judgment was made, the Premier promised he would amend the act and bring in rights and despite the fact that the Premier again during the 1999 election campaign promised the same thing.

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I say to the Attorney General, this bill tonight is more than a missed opportunity. It is a betrayal of victims like the two who brought the government to court in the first place and victims elsewhere in this province who trusted the Premier when he said, not once but twice, that he would fix this bill and bring in rights and who are still waiting for that to happen. The government should have lived up to the commitment the Premier made on not one but two occasions in 1999 and used this fall session to bring in a bill that provided statutory rights for victims of crime, and the government has refused to do that.

That surely speaks to a lack of credibility on the part of this government when it comes to protecting victims. The government is full of a lot of rhetoric about protecting victims, but a piece of legislation that’s supposed to enshrine those rights still doesn’t exist in this province, and it should.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Flaherty has moved third reading of Bill 114. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Orders of the day.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order 72(c), I'm now asking for unanimous consent to move to third reading of Bill 101.

The Acting Speaker: Is there consent? Agreed? It is agreed.

MOTORIZED SNOW VEHICLES AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MOTONEIGES

Mr Sterling, on behalf of Mr Jackson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to promote snowmobile trail sustainability and enhance safety and enforcement / Projet de loi 101, Loi visant à favoriser la durabilité des pistes de motoneige et à accroître la sécurité et les mesures d'exécution.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I would like to share my time with the former parliamentary assistant of tourism, Mr Joe Spina from Brampton, who is, in my view, Mr Snowmobile of Ontario. Joe Spina has done more in terms of going across this province talking to snowmobile users, people who are involved in blazing the trails for the snowmobile crowd. I've got to tell you, Mr Speaker, this guy has worked very hard on this bill and if anybody deserves credit for this, it's Joe Spina.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. It's five after 8. It's Wednesday night. Just try to control yourselves and we'll get along fine.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I thank the minister and our House leader for the compliments. I just want to say "Happy trails" to everyone this winter because Ontario's snowmobile season has begun. Once again, over 200,000 snowmobilers are going to be heading out to enjoy some of the finest trails in the world, and about one in five of those snowmobilers will be tourists from outside of Ontario. Tourist operators are gearing up for what we think will be not only another great winter season but perhaps the greatest one in a long time. An early start with the weather this year has given a real good boost to the snowmobiling industry.

This government has committed an unprecedented \$170 million over four years to market Ontario as a four-season destination. The Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp and the Northern Tourism Marketing Corp are working in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs to showcase Ontario as a great winter getaway destination.

Snowmobile trails have become an important part of Ontario's tourism infrastructure. Sustaining the trails means more visitors and more winter tourism jobs for Ontario families. In fact, the economic impact of this winter sport has been evaluated at about \$970 million to this province, clearly the largest, single most important winter recreation sport.

Unfortunately, the snowmobile season also brings with it tragic and preventable accidents. I'm sad to report that we have already recorded seven snowmobile fatalities this season. We need to do everything we can to make this family activity as safe as possible. The tremendous success of the industry has sparked the need for legislative changes. We have an outdated act that hasn't been touched since 1972. This government is committed to working with the Ontario snowmobile community to ensure we have a safer, stronger and sustainable system that provides for the needs of both tourists and recreational users alike.

For the past year, staff at the Ministries of Tourism, Transportation, Natural Resources, the Solicitor General, Northern Development and Mines, Health and Community and Social Services all contributed to the snowmobile task force, which is chaired by myself. With the teamwork that I received from these various ministries, hopefully we were able to find the right approach.

Bill 101 proposes changes to the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act and the Trespass to Property Act. It will enforce the current user-pay system, which requires snowmobilers who access the OFSC-sanctioned trails to have a permit. It will improve the safety of snowmobiling and support the reduction of fatalities through legislative and regulatory changes; through enhanced safety and enforcement measures, with penalties for non-compliance; with vehicle feature improvements; with enhanced trail design, maintenance and signage; and stronger enforcement on the trails to act as a deterrent to risk-taking behaviour. Bill 101 also amends insurance regulations to provide full coverage of snowmobiles under a motor vehicle liability policy, thereby enhancing the coverage of snowmobilers and, finally, provides consideration of special exemptions for traditional and business users of the trails.

I want to emphasize that the user-pay approach will ensure that people who will benefit most directly from Ontario's snowmobile trail system will contribute to its sustainability. Quite simply, if you use trails maintained by the OFSC, you need to buy a permit. If you do not use trails maintained by the OFSC, you do not need to buy a permit.

We also want to emphasize that the request for these changes in legislation came from the snowmobile community itself. The OFSC and the Ontario Snowmobile Safety Committee, which is a public sector and private sector partnership, made the request to our government's snowmobile task force earlier this year. The approach contained in Bill 101 was also broadly supported during public hearings in Kenora, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Bala and Peterborough. During these hearings, tourism oper-

ators and traditional users raised some concerns. We listened to them and we tried to revise the bill to meet their needs. In summary, the snowmobile community supports these changes and the public supports these changes.

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I want to take this opportunity to thank the executive and the negotiating team from the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs. The government liaison person from the federation is here in the gallery today, Tim West. Tim has worked tirelessly representing the federation in helping us go through the process these past 12 months, along with past president Bert Grant, former treasurer Bill Smith, current president Dennis Burns, not to mention the executive director and general manager, Ron Purchase. This crew of people has been very important and critical in working with us to try to shape a system and make revisions so that everyone would benefit.

I want to take this moment to also thank the opposition members for their support and for their co-operation at committee: Mr Levac; Mr Gravelle, for his input; Mike Brown from Algoma-Manitoulin; and last but not least, Mr Gerretsen. From the NDP caucus, I want to particularly recognize Shelley Martel and Frances Lankin, both snowmobilers and people who contributed with their input to this process. We urge the members of the Legislature to support this bill.

We also want to recognize, finally, the members of our own caucus, who were also in committee, people like Garfield Dunlop, Toby Barrett, Raminder Gill—my goodness, hey—Brad Clark and a number—

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You can't remember their names.

Mr Spina: There were a number of people in and out of the different committee hearings, but people who also were affected by snowmobiling in eastern Ontario—Joe Tascona, who has the home of the OFSC head office in Barrie, and particularly Minister Norm Sterling, who comes from the real heartbelt of snow and ice in the Ottawa Valley.

In conclusion, we want to ensure the growth of a stronger, safer, more sustainable snowmobile trail network in this province because it is a great winter family sport. We just want to encourage everyone to practise smart sledding. Happy trails.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I just want to take a few moments. Before I get into the details of Bill 101, I want to make sure that I extend to all my colleagues in the House a merry Christmas, happy season and a great new year for you all. I want to also take the time to recognize the people who work in this building. To them I say thank you for the diligence, the hard work and the overtime you've put in time and time again. To Hansard recorders, to the Clerk's office, to the security guards, to all the people who make this place work, I want to say thank you and I also want to say merry Christmas and happy new year to you all.

I want to compliment the member from Brampton Centre. He and I have spoken at length about the bill. As

he knows, there are some concerns that were brought up, and to the credit of the government, they made an effort to try to take care of those problems. The one that I do want to point out, though, is one that I got an answer for that I found rather interesting, and that was the amendment we offered for the municipalities that had concerns about unopened road allowances being used as snowmobile trails. In that problem, it was pointed out that there is a very large liability concern by the municipalities and they basically put that forward. It was mentioned three times in the hearings when we went across northern Ontario.

This is a 30-year standing problem. The fact is, the liability has not been answered. The government's response in terms of whether or not they could support the amendment—it actually had to be stood down because we didn't have the answers—was, "We believe it's already covered in the Occupiers' Liability Act and the Municipal Act. Therefore, because we believe it's already covered off, we're not going to support the amendment."

The municipal employee who brought that to our attention, Mr Robert List, wrote me back after he had heard the response from the government side and said—and this was somewhat of his line and I don't necessarily agree with it—"If you get two lawyers in a room, you might get three opinions." The problem was—

Interjection: Maybe more.

Mr Levac: Quite possibly more.

The problem that he brought to my attention was that because it is up to interpretation that way, they would have liked to have been able to have that in the bill to say that the liability would not be covered off by the municipalities. It's not that I didn't want that to be in the bill because it was an amendment. It was because there was a concern that the municipalities—and I did support the member's bill and do support the member's bill because of the importance it holds for the snowmobile industry and the snowmobilers themselves—may now start pulling the plug on using those unused road allowances. They may say, "Sorry, you can't have access to this because we're not convinced that the liability is covered off yet, and until we get that response we may be pulling the plug on that."

That being said, I still want to challenge the government to go back and make sure, make darned sure, that the municipalities have an understanding of that. To that end we asked at the committee level, and they accepted my motion, to make sure that the Minister of Municipal Affairs was notified by us, at the committee level, to please notify the municipalities of the interpretation that was being held. I'm getting the signal that that's being done and accepted. I want to thank the member for that, because that was an important part of that presentation, I felt, and it struck home: 30 years. So I want to thank the minister for doing that.

Finally, I want to make the comment that what we did here across the province in the consultation was really valuable input. To the member, as he said several times,

it was a wonderful opportunity for the people to come together and have input at the grassroots level.

I want to end with maybe a question that we need to ask the government: Why, then, time allocation for the important, ever-changing labour bills? We really need to know that the public gave input. If we use that as an example—and a good one—I would hope we would make better legislation because there were changes made. When the bill was introduced, it was pointed out that there were some problems in it, and when it came to committee we made those corrections. The system works when you let it.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I too would like to add my few brief comments to this bill. Of course, the first thing we have to recognize is the tremendous tourism potential that snowmobiling has in this province; not only that, but the effect that it has right now on the economies of much of our province. Snowmobiling is a sport that has taken off tremendously over the last 10 or 15 years, and it was high time that we had a regulatory system in place so that everybody knows what the rules are.

I find it kind of interesting. This bill went out to public consultation during the summer, and at that time we were advised by the illustrious former parliamentary assistant that this bill would be the first bill back when the House came back in September and we would deal with it so that the snowmobile clubs and the snowmobilers would know what the rules of the game were going to be as soon as the winter season arrived this year. Well, here we are on the very last day of the session, after we really haven't heard anything about this bill over the last two or three months, other than the fact that it was in committee for two days, and we're finally dealing with this bill in a very rapid fashion.

I'm just wondering whether or not the fact that the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs had some very serious concerns about this bill has affected the government's action on this bill. Let me just read to you some of the concerns they have which have not been addressed in the bill. In the brief that they presented to the committee—and they have an excellent brief, by the way—they made four very salient points. The first thing they said was that the final authority on all matters and processes relating to the administering of legislative permits must remain with the OFSC, especially use of permit revenues. "Bill 101 as currently written is at odds with this basic principle." That's the position of the snowmobile federation. "It transfers the authority for virtually every aspect of the OFSC trail permit to the Minister of Transportation while leaving all of the responsibility but not authority with the club volunteers." That, Speaker, is still a major concern.

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It goes on to say in the second point they raise that a legislative permit must be an absolute and easily enforceable requirement on any snowmobile trails operated and maintained by a club. They state that it's their belief that all OFSC trails must be included, without exception, and

that Bill 101 allows the Minister of Transportation to exempt classes of trails from the mandatory permit requirement.

The point is that so much in this bill has been left to regulation that I don't think the average snowmobiler really has any understanding as to—they in effect will have to deal with the ministry to make sure that the proper regulations are passed. You and I know that once we're talking about regulations those regulations will not be dealt with in the House. So the average snowmobiler may not in fact get to know what those regulations are until the deed in effect has been done. So there are some major concerns about this piece of legislation, not the least of which is the matter dealing with the unopened road allowances.

I see that the members opposite there are having a tremendous discussion. Undoubtedly, it's about the significance of this snowmobile legislation from which they will benefit as well as they enjoy the winter season. But the municipalities in this province have a real concern that there isn't an outright statement in the bill that basically states that the municipalities will not be held responsible for any snowmobile accident that may occur on unopened road allowances. That's a concern. We were told by the parliamentary assistant that there were all sorts of legal opinions that it really wasn't necessary to put that in the bill. But I think for the municipalities' sake, and we all know the number of responsibilities that have already been downloaded on municipalities, it would have been a lot clearer, a lot better if the act had simply included the statement that a municipality cannot be held responsible for any snowmobile accidents or any snowmobile liability on unopened road allowance. For the life of me I cannot understand why the ministry was reluctant to put that in there.

Having said all that, I hope this bill works. I hope the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs is happy with the legislation. At least now there's a regulatory framework in place, which is better than the situation the way it currently exists.

With that, Speaker, I wish you and every member in this House and everyone in Ontario a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Well, there's nowhere else I'd rather be at 8:30 this evening, than dealing with bill number four.

Let me begin by saying that as a result of the changes that have occurred during the clause-by-clause we will be supporting this bill. I want to make that clear to the folks who are here from OFSC tonight, and we have certainly indicated that to the former parliamentary assistant who has had the privilege of carrying this bill through this whole fall session.

I think it's worth noting, because the ex-parliamentary assistant made note of the amount of money that the government has spent on tourism to support trails, and it was quite an impressive amount of money, that were it not for the investment that had been made by our government in the Sno-TRAC program, we wouldn't

have trails to boast about today. That was a \$14-million investment to develop the trail system in this province to a first-class trail system that we could be proud of and that we could use to promote tourism in this province and that we could use to increase economic development, especially in my part of the world, where so many lodges and restaurants now benefit from this winter activity.

It was also our government that brought in the STOP officers, who act as trail wardens now to police what is happening on the trails. So I say to the ex-parliamentary assistant and the other government members who are here tonight, who are obviously very supportive of this bill and supportive of snowmobiling in general in this province, next time you want to yip and yap about the 10 lost years, remember where this all started. Were it not for that initial, important, significant \$14-million investment in the Sno-TRAC program, we wouldn't be here today with respect to snowmobiling in the province.

It's worth noting as well that OFSC, throughout that whole period of time when we made that investment, were incredibly good to work with and to deal with. I know the parliamentary assistant has benefited by their co-operation and expertise as well.

A couple of things with respect to the bill: the concern we have had from the beginning that I hope has been addressed is a concern that traditional users of trails would be forced to purchase a trail permit. We objected to that because we know, especially in my riding—and I think the other northern members who are here tonight can express the same—that we have many people who are not recreational users of the trail but use a small portion of the trail, for example, to access their camp or cottage so that in the winter they can ice fish on the lake in front of their camp or cottage. We also have a number of trappers who access small portions of the groomed trails in order to get to their traplines.

The concern that was raised during the consultations, and the concern that has been raised to many northern members in our constituency offices, is that it would not be fair to force those traditional users to pay for a permit, because they were not using those trails for recreational purposes; they were using them from time to time on weekends, if they wanted to go to their cottage, or from time to time to access their traplines, but they were not the hard-core recreational users of the groomed trail, who should indeed be paying for a permit and who should indeed be enforced in terms of making sure they are paying for the permits, to maintain that important trail system.

We raised those concerns with the parliamentary assistant and asked the government to look for a way to guarantee that traditional users would not be forced to pay a fee, would not have to buy a trail permit only for the purposes of accessing their camp or their trapline or some of the other uses that they would access those groomed trails for.

I hope the government has found a solution that's going to work. The government certainly told the committee during the clause-by-clause that it intended, by

regulation, to list all of those traditional users who would be exempt from having to buy a trail permit. That is a change from the government's first position during the committee hearings, because the first position was that those traditional users would have to buy a special trail permit which identified them as non-recreational users of those groomed trails. But it would still have meant that those individuals would have to pay some form of a fee to obtain those special permits. We objected to that, because we didn't think it was fair and we didn't think it made any sense that those who are not using the groomed trails for recreational purposes should have to pay a fee at all, just to be clearly designated as being exempt.

When the committee sat again in clause-by-clause, the parliamentary assistant announced that he had an agreement from the government that those traditional users who were going to be exempt would not have to purchase a special permit but would just be exempt and would not have to purchase a permit at all. We commend the government for making that change, because we didn't think it would be fair to have these people purchase a permit, and the government has committed to us, has guaranteed, has promised us that indeed those users will not have to buy a permit.

The second issue is the list of users who will be exempt. During the committee stage, the parliamentary assistant presented a four-page list to the committee members—I gather he had help on this—that would outline clearly who would be exempt from having to have a permit for using the groomed trails.

There are a numbers of users: trappers, cottage owners—who we were concerned with—First Nations, emergency workers etc. I would encourage the government to actually make that list public so that presenters who came to the committee hearings who were concerned about this particular issue will know they're going to be exempt, and also to make that list available to MPPs like myself who would like to assure our constituents who were particularly concerned about this section that they will be exempt. At present the document shows as being confidential for the purposes of the committee, and I would encourage the parliamentary assistant, in the new year, to provide all of us with a clear indication of who will be exempt so we can reassure our constituents that they will not be caught and have to buy a permit.

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Secondly, I know the parliamentary assistant has had some conversations with both the Minister of Transportation and the Solicitor General with respect to designation of trail wardens. He has assured me there will be ongoing discussions in the hope that we will reach a position whereby the Ministry of Transportation will be able to designate trail wardens for the purposes of this bill, and I hope that will happen. It was on that basis that I withdrew an amendment that would have done the same. I have done that on the basis that the parliamentary assistant has assured me that these discussions will go on and there should probably be a positive resolution to this. So I'm going to hold him to his word.

Thirdly, the purpose of the bill in the first place, as I understand it, was to secure an ongoing, substantial form of revenue for the OFSC so that it could continue to maintain the groomed trails in this province. I say to the government that I hope the changes that are coming in Bill 101 will provide the revenue that is needed to do that, but I would encourage the government to continue looking at an effective mechanism to pay for the grooming of the trails in the province.

The parliamentary assistant has clearly said—and frankly we all know, particularly those of us from the north—that the groomed trails provide an excellent vehicle for tourism in our province and generate incredible economic wealth. We do not want that put at risk. While we all hope the bill, by ensuring that recreational users have to buy permits and by having trail wardens who will enforce that, will generate the revenue the clubs need, if it doesn't, the government has to continue to look for a more effective mechanism to ensure the revenue is there to allow the clubs the ability to do the job they need to do to ensure we have a first-class trail system in this province. I say to the parliamentary assistant, I know you've looked at other jurisdictions, particularly in the States. I would encourage you to keep looking so that we have another mechanism to support this very important industry.

Finally, I want to very much thank the parliamentary assistant, Mr Joe Spina, who is here this evening. It is true that he and I, he and Ms Lankin, and he and Mr Bisson have had many discussions with respect to this bill, and I believe he worked very hard to try to meet those concerns. I hope we will have a bill before us that has met all the concerns and will continue to make sure the trail system is very economically viable in this province.

Mr Spina: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The danger when you mention names is that you forget, so I want to thank the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable David Turnbull; co-Chairs Julia Munro and Gary Stewart; and Chair Steve Gilchrist for their help.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Sterling has moved third reading of Bill 101. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (HISTORIC VEHICLES), 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (VÉHICULES ANCIENS)

Mr O'Toole moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to number plates for historic vehicles / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui

concerne les plaques d'immatriculation pour les véhicules anciens.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): With the indulgence of the House, I would like to recognize Gord Hazlett, a member of the East York Historical Society; Wayne Plunkett, one of the outstanding collectors in Ontario; John Parker; and my assistant, Greg MacNeil, for their hard work. With that, this will satisfy many of the antique enthusiasts in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate?

Mr O'Toole has moved third reading of Bill 99. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

STATUS OF BILL 107

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move to discharge Bill 107 from committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is there consent? It is agreed.

Mr O'Toole: I move that Bill 107 be discharged from the standing committee on justice and social policy and that it be ordered for third reading.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? It is agreed.

FIREFIGHTERS' MEMORIAL DAY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE JOUR DE COMMÉMORATION DES POMPIERS

Mr Levac moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to proclaim Firefighters' Memorial Day / Projet de loi 107, Loi proclamant le Jour de commémoration des pompiers.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): In the short time I have, I just want to take a moment to say thank you to the people who have put this bill forward. I want to take a moment to say thank you to the firefighters for the job they do, day in and day out. I also want to thank the staff who have worked so diligently and very hard on this bill. It's an important thing for us to say to the firefighters of Ontario that we appreciate the work you do. You are very dedicated, and we are in debt to you. Also, to their families we say, thank you very much and God bless you for the work you do.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Levac has moved third reading of Bill 107. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

STATUS OF BILL 125

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move the discharge of Bill 125 from committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it agreed? It is agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that Bill 125 be discharged from committee of the whole House and that it now be ordered for third reading.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

DEAF-BLIND AWARENESS
MONTH ACT, 2000LOI DE 2000 SUR LE MOIS
DE SENSIBILISATION
À LA SURDI-CÉCITÉ

Mr Young moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 125, An Act to proclaim the month of June as deaf-blind awareness month / Projet de loi 125, Loi proclamant le mois de juin Mois de sensibilisation à la surdi-cécité.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Young has moved third reading of Bill 125. Debate?

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to consider second reading of Bill 131.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? It is agreed.

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HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(IGNITION INTERLOCK DEVICE), 2000LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(DISPOSITIFS DE VERROUILLAGE
DU SYSTÈME DE DÉMARRAGE)

Mr Dunlop moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to establish an ignition interlock device program / Projet de loi 131, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'établir un programme d'utilisation de dispositifs de verrouillage du système de démarrage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Debate?

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? It is agreed.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, pursuant to standing order 72(c), I am now asking for unanimous consent to allow for third reading of Bill 131.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? It is agreed.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(IGNITION INTERLOCK DEVICE), 2000LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(DISPOSITIFS DE VERROUILLAGE
DU SYSTÈME DE DÉMARRAGE)

Mr Dunlop moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to establish an ignition interlock device program / Projet de loi 131, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'établir un programme d'utilisation de dispositifs de verrouillage du système de démarrage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): On a point of order, Speaker: I think we had one of the most remarkable speeches in the time that I've ever been here when the government House leader very generously talked about the opposition bringing forward ideas, positive and constructive suggestions, to make Ontario a better place. I want to acknowledge that and say how much it was appreciated on this side of the House.

In the spirit of goodwill that we have here today, I would like to seek unanimous consent—

Interjections.

Mr Caplan: You haven't even heard it. We have goodwill.

In the spirit of goodwill and co-operation we've had here tonight, I seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of a bill standing in the name of my leader, Mr McGuinty, Bill 165, An Act to restore goodwill and positive learning conditions in Ontario's schools.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): I know it's Christmas, but we can't let the goodwill go too far.

I seek unanimous consent to allow second and third readings to be called on Bill Pr2, Bill Pr17, Bill Pr25, Bill Pr26, Bill Pr28, Bill Pr31, Bill Pr32, Bill Pr33 and Bill Pr34.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? It is agreed.

CITY OF TORONTO ACT
(TRAFFIC CALMING), 2000

Mrs Mushinski moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr2, An Act respecting the City of Toronto.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Mrs Mushinski moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr2, An Act respecting the City of Toronto.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

MUNICIPALITY OF
WEST PERTH ACT, 2000

Mr Gilchrist, on behalf of Mr Johnson, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr17, An Act to change the name of The Corporation of the Township of West Perth to The Corporation of the Municipality of West Perth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? It is agreed.

Mr Gilchrist, on behalf of Mr Johnson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr17, An Act to change the name of The Corporation of the Township of West Perth to The Corporation of the Municipality of West Perth.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

My thanks to Mr Gilchrist.

1274187 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2000

Mr Young moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr25, An Act to revive 1274187 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? It is agreed.

Mr Young moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr25, An Act to revive 1274187 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

BANK OF NOVA SCOTIA
TRUST COMPANY ACT, 2000

Mr Mazzilli moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr26, An Act respecting the Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company and National Trust Company.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? It is agreed.

Mr Mazzilli moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr26, An Act respecting the Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company and National Trust Company.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

KMFC HOLDINGS INC. ACT, 2000

Mr Ouellette moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr28, An Act to revive KMFC Holdings Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? It is agreed.

Mr Ouellette moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr28, An Act to revive KMFC Holdings Inc.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

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MUNICIPALITY OF
SIOUX LOOKOUT ACT, 2000

Ms Martel, on behalf of Mr Hampton, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr31, An Act to change the name of The Corporation of the Town of Sioux Lookout to The Corporation of the Municipality of Sioux Lookout.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Martel, on behalf of Mr Hampton, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr31, An Act to change the name of The Corporation of the Town of Sioux Lookout to The Corporation of the Municipality of Sioux Lookout.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

CANADIAN NATIONAL EXHIBITION
ASSOCIATION ACT, 2000

Mr Young, on behalf of Mr Kells, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr32, An Act respecting the Canadian National Exhibition Association.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Young, on behalf of Mr Kells, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr32, An Act respecting the Canadian National Exhibition Association.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

IDLEWYLD MANOR ACT, 2000

Ms Martel, on behalf of Mr Christopherson, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr33, An Act respecting Idlewyld Manor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Martel, on behalf of Mr Christopherson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr33, An Act respecting Idlewyld Manor.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ST JEROME'S UNIVERSITY ACT, 2000

Mr Wettlaufer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr34, An Act respecting The University of St Jerome's College.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Wettlaufer moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr34, An Act respecting The University of St Jerome's College.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I would seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the chief election officer.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? It is agreed. The Chair recognizes the minister—the House leader, the minister of corrections and something else—Intergovernmental Affairs, of course. You thought I didn't know it.

APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor in Council:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now

assembled, request the appointment of John Hollins as chief election officer for the province of Ontario, as provided in section 3 of the Election Act, RSO 1990, chapter E.6, and that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker."

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the government House leader, Minister of Correctional Services—

Hon Mr Sterling: No, no, that's fine.

The Acting Speaker: —and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Hon Mr Sterling: I believe David Young and a member from each party have a few words to say about Mr Hollins.

The Acting Speaker: I think we agree.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I am cognizant of the time and I will be brief, but I do want to take a few moments, and I anticipate some of my colleagues will as well, to talk a little bit about the process that has just been completed.

Some months ago a number of members of this Legislative Assembly, including Mr Duncan, the member for Windsor-St Clair, and Mr Marchese, the member for Trinity-Spadina, together with Gary Carr, the Speaker, began quite an extensive and comprehensive process to search for a new chief election officer, with the pending retirement of Mr Bailie. After conducting a rather extensive investigation, considering literally dozens of applications and conducting many interviews, we have found a candidate who we believe will do an exemplary job in his new position.

His name is Mr John Hollins. He's an individual I had some dealings with, although I do not remember dealing with him directly, when he was the chief election officer in North York. He not only ran elections that appeared—from the outside looking in, in any event—to be flawless, but the results came in a timely fashion. More recently he has been the chief election officer in the city of Toronto and once again has distinguished himself as an individual who took his job very seriously.

Interjection.

Mr Young: No, actually he is not a lawyer. He is an individual who has distinguished himself by doing the job efficiently and reaching out to groups, including the homeless and transients, who have not traditionally voted in large numbers.

I am confident that Mr Hollins will do a very fine job as chief election officer of this province. I congratulate the successful candidate. I thank my colleagues for what was a very time-consuming but rewarding endeavour, and I look forward to working with Mr Hollins over the coming years.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The official opposition is pleased to endorse the appointment of Mr Hollins. I would say in a very serious manner that this is probably one of the most important appointments this Legislature can make. I say to the government that it was done well, it was done in a non-partisan fashion and I think it shows what we can accomplish in a relatively

short time when we work together—Mr Marchese did an outstanding job representing his party, and Mr Young and the Speaker—and when we take the opportunity to listen to one another and try to reason things out.

The official opposition welcomes the appointment of Mr Hollins and congratulates the government on this process and for allowing it to truly be a non-partisan process which yielded what we believe to be a very good result for Ontario.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It has already been mentioned that it was my colleague from Trinity-Spadina, Mr Marchese, who was part of the selection process committee for our caucus. I know the government members are very disappointed that Mr Marchese is not here tonight to comment on this appointment, but let me pass on these remarks on his behalf.

He did want me to say that in fact there were many highly qualified and very capable individuals who put their names forward for this position. The two who were short-listed, Mr Hollins included among the two, were very capable, very excellent candidates. He is very pleased by this appointment. We in the New Democratic Party would like to congratulate Mr Hollins and say we look forward to working with him in the future.

2100

Hon Mr Sterling: I think it would be remiss of the Legislature not to thank the outgoing chief election officer, Warren Bailie, who served the province of Ontario for over a quarter of a century, who has taken us through I don't know how many elections and a number of redistributions, changes and those kind of things and has been known around the world, quite frankly, and has gone to a number of countries outside of Canada to supervise elections as well. I think the Legislature owes a great deal of thanks for his dedication, his hard work on behalf of all the politicians and the people of Ontario in running a whole number of elections in a fair and equitable and even-handed manner.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved a motion without notice. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

HOUSE SCHEDULE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): I move government notice of motion 92.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I recognize the minister from Lanark-Carleton.

Hon Mr Sterling: The minister from Lanark-Carleton?

The Acting Speaker: There's only one and that's you.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that notwithstanding the order of the House dated December 13, 2000, that we shall not sit on Thursday, December 21, 2000.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. It is carried.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I recognize the minister from Lanark-Carleton.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and proud I am to be the minister of Lanark-Carleton.

I move that the following standing committees be authorized to meet during the winter recess in accordance with the schedule of meeting dates agreed to by the three party whips and tabled with the Clerk of the Assembly, to consider the following:

The standing committee on justice and social policy, up to 6 days to consider government business and up to 2 days to consider Bill 118;

The standing committee on general government, up to 11 days to consider Bill 159;

The standing committee on finance and economic affairs, up to 8 days for pre-budget consultations;

The standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, up to 3 days to consider Bill 135; and

The standing committee on public accounts, up to 8 days to consider the Auditor's Report and that the committee be authorized to release its reports during the winter recess by depositing a copy of any report with the Clerk of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sterling moves that the following—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Dispense? We dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, I am going to call an adjournment of the motion shortly but before I do, I just want to say that the Clerk of the House, Claude DesRosiers, said to me tonight, as we were going through the process, "It's been a good night. I wish all the meetings of the Legislature could be as good as this night." Perhaps it's an element of the goodwill we still have with each and every one of us on this side of the floor and on the opposite side of the floor. I am sure I express the best wishes of everyone here to each other in saying let's look for a happy holiday season with our families and with our constituents and let's look toward a much more co-operative year in 2001.

I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sterling moves adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. There won't be a 30-minute bell. The motion is carried.

The House adjourned at 2106.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement
Bartolucci, Rick (L)	Sudbury	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Beaubien, Marcel (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bountrogianni, Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Boyer, Claudette (L)	Ottawa-Vanier	
Bradley, James J. (L)	St Catharines	
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président de la Chambre et Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Bryant, Michael (L)	St Paul's	
Caplan, David (L)	Don Valley East / -Est	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC)	Oakville	Speaker / Président
Christopherson, David (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles
Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Clark, Brad (PC)	Stoney Creek	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, assistant deputy government whip / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Cleary, John C. (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	
Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC)	Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coburn, Brian (PC)	Ottawa-Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Conway, Sean G. (L)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Cordiano, Joseph (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Curling, Alvin (L)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
DeFaria, Carl (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Dombrowsky, Leona (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Duncan, Dwight (L)	Windsor-St Clair	opposition House leader / chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / -Nord	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC)	Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Elliott, Brenda (PC)	Guelph-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation and minister responsible for seniors and women / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs et ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Galt, Doug (PC)	Northumberland	
Gerretsen, John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	
Gill, Raminder (PC)	Bramalea-Gore- Malton-Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	
Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC)	Nipissing	Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Hastings, John (PC)	Etobicoke North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Transports
Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent Essex	
Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC)	Erie-Lincoln	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Johnson, Bert (PC)	Perth-Middlesex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Kells, Morley (PC)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	
Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Parkdale-High Park	
Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip, deputy government House leader / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement, leader parlementaire adjoint
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / -Centre	
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / -Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Lankin, Frances (ND)	Beaches-East York	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martin, Tony (ND)	Sault Ste Marie	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General and minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général et ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Maves, Bart (PC)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Mazzilli, Frank (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General / adjoint parlementaire au solliciteur général
McGuinty, Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / -Sud	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLeod, Lyn (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough- Aldershot	
Molinari, Tina R. (PC)	Thornhill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / -Nord	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjointe suppléante du gouvernement
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	
Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Durham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	
Peters, Steve (L)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Phillips, Gerry (L)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Pupatello, Sandra (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sampson, Rob (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / -Ouest	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Smitherman, George (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	
Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Spina, Joseph (PC)	Brampton Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister of Correctional Services, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement, ministre des Services correctionnels
Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Peterborough	
Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
Tilson, David (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC)	Markham	Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Don Valley West / -Ouest	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Wood, Bob (PC)	London West / -Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire au président du Conseil de gestion
Young, David (PC)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances

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Règlements et projets de loi privés**

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